# A COMMENTARY ON THE CULT OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

REV. MYRON ZALITACH

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BY
THE REVEREND MYRON ZALITACH

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TO ALL THOSE DEVOUT SOULS WHO, IN READY OBEDIENCE TO THE GRATEFUL IMPULSE OF THEIR CHRISTIAN CATHOLIC HEARTS AND TO THE EARNEST EXHORTATION OF THE LATE SOVEREIGN PONTIFF, PIUS X, ARE PRAYERFULLY STRIVING THAT THE MOST AUGUST SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST MAY BE EVER BETTER KNOWN AND LOVED, WHAT THESE PAGES MAY CONTAIN OF MERIT, IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

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# FOREWORD

When Pope Pius X, upon ascending the Throne of St. Peter, announced as the slogan of his pontificate "To restore all things in Christ," the faithful scarcely entertained the thought that his words were to be taken literally.

The general opinion was that the Sovereign Pontiff had in mind the promulgation of certain moral and doctrinal principles, inherited by the Church from her Divine Founder, those principles, for example, which set forth and determine the rightful influence of Catholicism upon private life, upon civic affairs and upon social relations. It occurred to only a few at the time, however, that this leaven destined to bring about so profound a transformation, this sanctifying ferment, as it were, designed to recreate a godless world, would be nothing less than the living Christ Himself, hidden beneath the Eucharistic appearances.

Even when the saintly Pontiff began to carry into execution the spirit of his adopted motto through the issuance of the two immortal decrees

on the subject of frequent and daily Holy Communion, to wit: in 1905, that relative to all the faithful, and in 1910, that relative to children—even then Catholics in general were far from comprehending the transcendent importance of the Papal project. The best proof of this is the fact that the above mentioned edicts did not at first meet with the enthusiastic reception they so richly merited. Many received them with reserve, others with apparent indifference. It was some time before the Catholic world at large came to appreciate how mighty and far-reaching was the work that Pope Pius had initiated and with grateful joy proclaimed him "The Eucharistic Pope."

Today no man can doubt that, thanks to the zealous and energetic piety of Pope Pius X, the Catholic Church has entered upon the certain path of regeneration. She has gained in inner strength; she has won the respect of those without her fold, and she is now waging with a larger success than ever before her unremitting warfare against the enemies of the Kingdom of God. She has become again most truly and most obviously "The Militant Church."

In the Near East, for the present, unhappily, the realm of atheists, she constitutes an undenia-

ble force. In the West her prestige has increased immensely, and in numerous states, once so violently anticlerical, we find that the parties of the left have dulled the weapons lately employed against religion by eliminating from their rosters the names of the Church's irreconcilable foes. Throughout the middle classes generally the growth of religious feeling is evident, and it reasonably concludes that if we but follow the path indicated to us by Pope Pius X, we may face the future courageously.

In order to contribute to the best of our limited ability to the growth of the Eucharistic cult we are here presuming to place at the feet of Christ Our Saviour, the present modest bouquet of three little flowers. This figurative bouquet comprises three brief and distinct treatises, not, perhaps, too closely bound together by logical ties, but which, according to the hope of the author, may serve to some extent to supplement our Eucharistic literature.

In the first part of our work there is elucidated a truth, in ages past widely accepted, but today not sufficiently emphasized; namely, that the desire for Holy Communion is absolutely necessary for our spiritual regeneration. Let it not be supposed that this allegation in any way

detracts from the unique function dogmatically ascribed to the so-called Sacraments of the Dead, Baptism and Penance; such is by no means the case, for on the contrary, when taken in its proper interpretation it merely manifests their close connection with the Holy Eucharist and reduces the entire sacramental system to a common denominator.

In the second part the sacramental effects of Holy Communion are shown in their relation to the varying periods of human life. The Blessed Eucharist is there seen to be a real cure and solace for all the defects and sufferings of the soul, not only in undeveloped, inexperienced youth and in declining old age, but during each succeeding stage of the soul's earthly pilgrimage.

The third part of our dissertation consists of a historical study proving the religious and moral life and strength of the Church to have been at all times in direct proportion to the intensity of the Eucharistic cult. They have ever kept pace with its growth and have fallen off with its abatement.

These three tracts have one underlying thought, which is, that although the Catholic Church does possess besides the all-holy Sacrament of the Altar, other efficacious means of in-

fusing grace and of fostering religious life, and although on this account the Eucharist cannot be said to be indispensably necessary to salvation, nevertheless, these other instruments of God's favor do actually derive their vigor from the Holy Eucharist Itself.

Surely such reflections cannot but render still more fervent our heartfelt desire to live our lives in closest union with our Eucharistic Lord!

# INTRODUCTION

The faithful today possess a codified system of dogmatic truth formulated by the Church down through the nineteen centuries that have elapsed since she first received from the lips of Our Divine Saviour her exclusive and momentous commission to teach all nations.

The catechism is accordingly being taught in a thoroughly logical manner as the truths of religion have long since been welded into one coherent scheme. This, however, was not always the case; for while the individual truths of Faith were always taught clearly and categorically, the completed system was a matter of gradual growth. The basis of the theological systematics of today is formed by a variety of dialectic and apologetic efforts and by a vast number of philosophical works. The teaching Church has utilized this rich material, and with the unfailing assistance of the Holy Ghost, has given to the revealed truths of Faith a dogmatic form.

Can it be said that this age-old process of dog-

matic definition has already ended? Assuredly not. Life is continually confronting mankind with new problems, the solution of which is either absolutely indispensable or at least extremely desirable. When such questions are publicly agitated and when it becomes evident that they impinge upon the domain of faith or morals, either the Oecumenical Council, convened under the authority of the Vicar of Christ, or the Sovereign Pontiff alone, speaking *ex cathedra,* pronounces upon the matter at issue, rendering infallible decision. In this fashion the Church's dogmatic definitions have through the ages notably increased in number.

At the present moment the most important subject occupying the attention of theologians is the cult of the Most Holy Eucharist. Hence our Eucharistic literature is steadily growing in volume. The practice of frequent and daily Holy Communion is spreading with rapidity and is being adopted by millions of the faithful. These myriads of zealous adorers of the Blessed Sacrament look to It as a sure remedy for all the moral sufferings and ailments wherewith humanity is afflicted. They expect, and not without warrant, that through the due worship of the Bread of Angels a veritable millennium can in-

deed be inaugurated here upon earth; but they realize full well that the early dawning of this golden age must depend upon a speedy spread of the Eucharistic cult according to the plenary sense of Our Saviour's words, and must depend, furthermore, upon the intensity of devotion wherewith this cult shall be practiced.

There can scarcely exist a shadow of doubt that an adequate comprehension of the unique rôle played by the Most Blessed Sacrament in the sanctification of the Christian soul will serve both to augment the hosts of frequent communicants and to heighten the ardour of their love for the Veiled Majesty of the Tabernacle.

It is the aim of the present treatise to facilitate such an understanding and to popularize it to the greatest possible extent. Neither is it nor can it be our object to inform the kind reader of things novel and hitherto unheard of; still less would we propose views that might be adjudged temerous in the light of sound orthodoxy. We desire simply to excavate from the sacred lore of centuries that are past, the original conception of the profound importance for salvation of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

As to whether or not we have achieved any degree of success in our proposed task the decision

must rest with our ecclesiastical superiors and with the kind reader, whose prayers we humbly ask both for ourselves and for our priestly ministry.

# PART I.

# THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST AND THE SUPERNATURAL LIFE.

# CHAPTER I.

## THE TEACHING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ON THE NECESSITY OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM AND THE SACRAMENT OF THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST.

On superficially comparing the various utterances of Our Divine Lord regarding the necessity of these two Sacraments, it might perhaps appear that some inconsistency were involved since the major emphasis seems to be given here to Baptism and there to the Eucharist.

In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus categorically stated that Baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation: "I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." (John: III, 3-5).

However, Our Saviour is quite as positive in His command relative to the reception of Holy Communion! "Amen, amen, I say unto you: Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." (John: VI, 54).



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These negative precepts are, however, in no wise mutually exclusive, and accordingly it is not at all difficult to reconcile them. Since it is impossible to enter Heaven save we be regenerated in Baptism and since there can exist no supernatural life without partaking of the Holy Eucharist, the deduction is surely obvious that to see salvation one must be both a baptized Christian and a worthy partaker of the Divine Mysteries. And truly in many passages of Holy Writ has the Saviour set down both these obligations.

In regard to Baptism He issued subsequently to His resurrection the following precept: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt.: XXVIII, 19). Relative to the Eucharist, His will was during the Last Supper expressed in these words: "Do this for a commemoration of me." (Luke: XXII, 19).

However, the matter under discussion appears somewhat more complex on taking into consideration certain other passages of Holy Scripture which treat of the importance of these two Sacraments. Of Baptism we read: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he

that believeth not shall be condemned." (Mark: XVI, 16). From this quotation it might conceivably be argued that Faith and Baptism alone suffice for salvation; but to maintain so heterodox an opinion would be tantamount to adopting Luther's heresy. Moreover, the above-cited words of Christ on the necessity of Holy Communion (John: VI, 54) plainly attest that Baptism alone is not sufficient. Still more emphatic is Our Lord's assurance of the wondrous efficacy of the Eucharist as expressed in the following words:

"I am the living Bread . . . if any man eat of this Bread he shall live forever . . . he that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath life everlasting." (John: VI, 51-55).

Perhaps biblical scholars would have encountered some perplexity in attempting to reconcile these various passages were it not for the happy fact that the Apostles themselves have, through their recorded actions, forever removed all possibility of erroneous interpretation. We are not rash in supposing that they heard from the lips of Jesus much more than is set down by the inspired authors; and we know that these first Bishops received both commands of Our Lord

with equal gravity and carried them into execution with equal zeal.

We read that it was the uniform policy of the Apostles not for a moment to defer the Baptism of the early neophytes once they were convinced of the presence of the dispositions requisite. On the very day of Pentecost, the birthday of the Catholic Church, Saint Peter delivered his first missionary sermon, the glorious result of which is known to all: "They, therefore, that received his word were baptized; and there were added in that day about three thousand souls." (Acts: II, 41). Again St. Philip saw no cause for delaying the Baptism of the newly-converted eunuch of Queen Candace. To this neophyte's question: "See, here is water; what doth hinder me from being baptized? . . . . Philip said: If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. . . . And they went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch. And he baptized him." (Acts: VIII, 36-38).

Moreover, as soon as St. Peter became convinced that "the grace of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the Gentiles also," he did not further hesitate to perform the Baptism of Cornelius and of all his kinsmen and household. Rather he exclaimed impulsively: "Can any

man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts: X, 45-48).

It is undeniable that the preparatory period of instruction known as the catechumenate did operate to delay the reception of Baptism to a certain extent. However, this by no means weakens our assertion that the primitive Christians deemed Baptism indispensable to salvation and were accustomed, for this reason, to administer it to the neophytes as soon as the circumstances of the individual case would warrant. The catechumenate proved highly useful as a safeguard against the wiles and the sacrilegious insincerity of undesirable intruders; but it did not impose on the individual postulant any very lengthy term of probation, since four times during the year and sometimes even oftener there took place the solemn Baptism of the catechumens. From this we properly infer that the initiatory period lasted only from two to three months. Of course there were occasional instances of prelates in various localities putting off the Baptism of some converts from two to

three years; but these cases being rare and isolated need not be here subjected to scrutiny.[1]

The deep veneration in which the early Christians held the Sacrament of Baptism may be measured not only from the laudatory epithets which they applied to it, but also from the stateliness of ritual with which they surrounded it, notwithstanding the primitive simplicity of all other sacred ceremonies, not excepting even those of the Holy Mass.

The early Christians variously termed Baptism "The Fountain of Regeneration," [2] "The Enlightenment," "The Sacred Spring," "The Water of Life," "The Seal of Christ," [3] and it was the prevailing usage to administer this sacrament on the eve of the most important feasts amid imposing rites symbolic of the joyful character of the occasion.

Nor was the apostolic age lacking in reverent appreciation of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. At the very beginning the chosen twelve had introduced the practice of administering Holy Communion to all those present at the offering of the August Sacrifice, even in the

[1] Marx, J.: Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte, 115.
[2] Titus: III, 5.
[3] Tertullian: De Baptismo, Patrologia Latina, I, 1197.

case of persons whose piety might prompt them to hear Mass daily. To this St. Luke thus testifies: "And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart." (Acts II, 46).

Assuredly this sacramental discipline established by the Apostles themselves provides the most authoritative imaginable interpretation of the several scriptural passages quoted at the beginning of the present section; and in view of this interpretation it seems sufficiently evident that those passages contain no contradictory element. Clearly Baptism and the Blessed Eucharist are both necessary to salvation and so Holy Church has infallibly declared them to be in the following definitive pronouncements of the Oecumenical Councils of Trent and of the Lateran: (a) "Whoever would say that Baptism is optional, i.e., not necessary to salvation, let him be anathema!" [1] Each one of the faithful of whichever sex, after he shall have attained the years of discretion, must privately confess all his sins faithfully to his own priest . . . reverently

[1] Sessio VII., De Bapt., Can. 5. "Si Quis dixerit, Baptismum liberum esse, hoc est, non necessarium ad salutem, anathema sit."

receiving at least at Easter, the Sacrament of the Eucharist . . ." [1]

There now remains only the question of determining the mystical relationship, if such there be, between these two sacraments. Are they entirely independent one of the other, or are they essentially linked together? If the latter be the case, in what way are they conjoined? Again, are they of equal dignity or not; and if not, to which of them belongs the precedence in the scheme of salvation? To these queries the New Testament affords us no direct response; but from the pages of the inspired writers we are justified in concluding that during the very first days of the Apostle's campaign of evangelization the Church's understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism underwent a certain evolution. Furthermore, theological literature leaves no doubt that in later centuries the conviction of the necessity of Holy Communion became ever more and more firmly fixed, until at length the Church officially proclaimed the Blessed Eucharist the highest aim of all the sacraments: "Omnium sacramentorum finis." [2]

[1] Chapt XXI, Sess. 5, "Omnis utriusque sexus fidelis, postquam ad annos discretionis pervenerit, omnia solus peccata saltem semel in anno fideliter confiteatur proprio suo sacerdoti . . . suscipiens reverenter ad minus in Paschate Eucharistae Sacramentum. . . ."

[2] Catechismus Romanus, Pars II, Caput IV, No. 50.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOTION OF BAPTISM'S IMPORTANCE.

After the Apostles had entered upon their sacred ministry subsequent to the ascension of Our Lord, revelation did not forthwith cease, but continued until the death of the last of the twelve, St. John the Evangelist; and this last stage of the Christian revelation was instrumental among other things in completing the Apostle's understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism. They now perceived two truths of the New Dispensation which apparently Our Redeemer had not clarified for them during His earthly sojourn: first, that circumcision as commanded by the Mosaic Law was not to be a prerequisite for the reception of Baptism; second, that the very desire to accept the religion of Christ has power to effect the selfsame spiritual regeneration as that brought about by the baptismal rite, especially when such desire is sealed by martyrdom.

The power of these truths the Apostles came to learn in connection with St. Peter's visit to the home of the Gentile centurion Cornelius. The Apostles had, to be sure, received explicit instructions to teach and convert all nations (Matt.: XXVIII, 19), but in practice they found themselves confused by the precept of the Mosaic Law forbidding all intercourse whatever with Gentiles (John: IV, 9; Galatians: II, 12). This Mosaic principle was supported not only by the Jews, who in the best of faith continued to fulfill the ceremonial prescriptions of the Old Testament; but also, apparently, by the assurance of Our Lord that He had come not to destroy but to fulfill the law and the prophets (Matt.: V, 17-18).

And truly we know that St. Peter felt obligated to preserve the ancient rites of Judaism, for even when encouraged by a voice from Heaven to kill and eat animals proscribed by Moses as unclean, he refused emphatically, saying. "Far be it from me; for never did I eat anything that is common and unclean." (Acts: X, 14). However, the very fact that the Lord called him to preach in the house of the Gentile centurion Cornelius unfolded before the spiritual eyes of St. Peter new horizons. "In very deed," he

now exclaimed, "I perceive that God is not a respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh justice is acceptable to Him." (Acts: X, 34-35). Later on, during the sermon which he delivered under the impression of his vision at Joppe (Acts: X, 11-16) St. Peter noticed that his hearers, although not yet baptized, were already "speaking with tongues and magnifying God" (Acts: X, 46), and he was led by this marvel to conclude: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts: X, 47).

A better understanding of Baptism's full significance was at this time gradually spreading among all the Judeo-Christians. At the outset, to be sure, they "contended with him, saying: Why didst thou go in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them?" (Acts: XI, 2-4). However, on hearing St. Peter's recital of his experience and on hearing the conclusion he drew from it that "If then, God gave them the same grace as to us also who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ: who was I that could withstand God?" —they, too, recognized the new truth till then unrevealed to them and "Having heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God,

saying: God then hath also to the Gentiles given repentance unto life." (Acts: XI, 17-18).

Some exegetists there are who venture the opinion that the Grace of the Holy Ghost poured out upon Cornelius and his kinsmen and household before their formal Baptism was not a proof of their sanctification through Baptism by desire prior to their Baptism by water; but that it was rather a miraculous manifestation of an actual or coöperant grace whereby God deigned to prepare their souls for the sacramental rite. Under the influence of St. Peter's sermon, say these scholars, there were engendered in the hearts of his audience the virtues of faith and contrition; and only subsequently to this interior regeneration did there appear the coöperant grace, the gift of tongues through an extraordinary divine favour, freely bestowed[1] (gratia gratis data, actualis interna immediata supernaturalis).

However, such an explanation is far from satisfactory. It is true that the extraordinary graces of the Holy Ghost "freely given" may be granted to anyone, even to a person unbaptized; but this action is taken by the Almighty only for

[1] Allioli, von, Joseph Franz. Dr.: Ausfürliche Anmerkungen zur heiligen Schrift.

man's spiritual good, especially for his conversion.[1] In the present instance, however, St. Peter came to the home of Cornelius not to be himself converted but to convert the household; and as we have seen, the Prince of the Apostles stood in need of a better understanding of the conditions under which to receive persons into the Church of God. This sought-for knowledge he obtained mainly through miraculous manifestations of the graces of the Holy Ghost bestowed from time to time by Divine Providence on devout believers who were already in the state of sanctifying grace (gratia sanctificans prima).

Indirectly, moreover, another problem was now solved. St. Peter here perceived that the very desire of serving God in the true Faith may win sanctifying grace for a man even prior to his reception of the Sacrament of Baptism. Nevertheless, in cases of this kind it would invariably be necessary for the subject to fulfill the positive precept of Christ by seeking at the earliest opportunity to receive the baptismal rite.

After a lapse of fifteen centuries this truth was at last formulated by the Oecumenical Council of Trent in the statement that "Without

[1] Bartmann, Bernhard: Lehrbuch der Dogmatic, II, 11.

the Fountain of Regeneration or the desire of the same, one cannot obtain the effects of the Sacrament of Baptism." [1]

It now remains for us to explain the reasons for the high esteem in which Baptism of Blood was held by the early Christians, for there exists a wealth of proof that they unhesitatingly credited it with the same sanctifying power as the Church attributes to Baptism of Water.

The high moral worth of Baptism of Blood is patent. The death of the martyr for the Faith of Christ has from the very beginning won for itself so universal a recognition that it would be utterly futile to investigate the origin and development of this recognition. Baptism of Blood has ever been conceded to be of the same value as Baptism of Water, not only by logic and sentiment, but also, and what is of greater import, by revelation.

Not only did Our Blessed Lord promise eternal happiness to all who should sacrifice their lives for Him and for the Gospel, that is, for the love of God and of the Faith (Matt.: X, 39), but He furthermore drew an exact analogy between this form of Baptism and His own death

[1] Denzinger, H.: Enchiridion Symbolorum et Definitionum, Editio VIII, 1899, No. 678.

on the cross: "Can you drink of the chalice that I drink of or be baptized with the Baptism wherewith I am baptized?" (Mark: X, 38). And again: "And I have a Baptism wherewith I am to be baptized and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." (Luke: XII, 50). In what respect can one compare the Sacrament of Baptism with the death of Our Saviour? What constitutes the *tertium comparationis?* This is explained by St. Paul: "Know you not that all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in His death? For we are buried together with Him by Baptism into death: that, as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." (Romans: VI, 3-5). Thus the essence of the comparison consists in the immersion of the candidate in the font and of his subsequent emergence from it. As the Body of Christ was buried in the ground only to be resurrected afterwards, so is the sinner immersed in the waters of the baptistry in order to emerge spiritually regenerated.[1] On comparing the inward dispositions of persons receiving Baptism

[1] Allioli: Op. cit., 546.

of Water with those of heroic spirits who give testimony of their faith and of their love of God by the shedding of their blood, we must admit that there is a gradation (*a minori ad maius*). If, therefore, the desire to be baptized and to be united with Jesus in the Eucharist is a sufficient preparation for spiritual regeneration, surely the martyr's death more than suffices since it is an irrefutable proof of complete love of God (cf. John: XV, 13). The analogy between the death and burial of Christ and His subsequent resurrection on the one hand, and the death and resurrection of a martyr on the other, must have impressed itself deeply upon the hearts of the early Christians. Generally speaking, this notion became greatly popularized; for the Eastern Church, or at least the Graeco-Slavonic Church, has composed on its basis a magnificent hymn in honor of the martyrs. In this anthem the soul of the martyr thus addresses itself to Christ: "Thee, O my bethrothed, I love, and while seeking Thee, I suffer; I am being crucified and buried with Thy Baptism; I am suffering for Thy sake in order to reign in Thee; I am dying for Thee in order to live with Thee. Would that Thou receive me as a pure sacrifice who offereth herself to Thee with love."

The greater part of this canticle might, to be sure, refer to any martyr, especially to one already baptized with water; but the closing words can allude only to one who was not baptized with water, but who received his Baptism by blood.

# CHAPTER III.

## THE GROWTH OF THE APPRECIATION OF THE EUCHARIST AS INDISPENSABLE TO SALVATION

From the very beginning the Apostles and their Disciples cherished the most ardent devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and strove by their preaching and by their example to foster this devotion in the hearts of the early Christians. There was, therefore, no need for them to theorize regarding the meaning of the Eucharist and its importance in the scheme of salvation.

Toward the close of the first century, however, the beautiful structure of Christian life seemed already to show signs of weakening. Under the malign influence of certain heretical groups, notably the Docetae and the Gnostics, the pristine vigour of the Faith was to some extent undermined, and the fervour of believers in approaching the Holy Table began to diminish. This lamentable turn of events was not altogether evil in its ultimate results, as it gave impetus to the elaboration of the science of apologetics. Religious truths formerly accepted

without intensive scrutiny on the authority of revelation, now required to be based on reason. Furthermore, it became imperative to establish a logical nexus among the various dogmas of faith. As early as the second century there arose, accordingly, catechetical schools, of which the most renowned were situated at Antioch in Syria and at Alexandria in Egypt. In these academies the articles of faith were not taught disconnectedly and without philosophical substantiation as heretofore, but methodically and as a logically coherent system.

Later on the works of the early apologists were drawn upon by the Fathers of the Church in their battle to defend dogmatic truth against the onslaughts of heresiarchs. Especially in regard to the Blessed Eucharist the Fathers found abundant dialectical material. All the similes and other arguments wherewith they strove to impress upon their hearers the necessity of Holy Communion represent the Eucharist as being organically united with the supernatural life of the soul, as the normal source of that life, and a source which cannot be supplanted by any other. In as early a work as the "Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles" (The Didache), it is written that Holy Communion has as great, if not

greater, efficacy for fostering the supernatural life of the soul as ordinary food has for supporting the natural life of the body: "O God Almighty," we have read, "Thou hast given to men food and drink for their sustenance that they might thank Thee. And to us Thou hast granted spiritual food and drink and life eternal through Thy Son."

St. Ignatius of Antioch (✠107) terms the Blessed Eucharist "The Divine Bread," "The Remedy for Attaining Immortality," "The Antidote against Death," and "The Means for Life in Jesus Christ." (Ad Ephes.: 20, 2).

St. Ireneus extends the influence of the Eucharist even to the everlasting life of the body: "Our bodies, if participating in the Holy Eucharist, are not subject to decay, because they are carrying within themselves the seed of resurrection unto life eternal."

St. Gregory of Nyssa deals extensively with this topic in the thirty-seventh chapter of his "Great Cathechism." In his opinion it is the divinely constituted goal of every Christian believer to be transubstantiated into Christ, an object which is attained by means of the Blessed Eucharist. This illustrious teacher goes on to tell us that as bread may be spoken of as

the body of him who is eating it, since on being consumed it is transformed into his body, so also the Bread of Angels, if consumed by a man with faith, may rightly be considered as his body, for through this Divine Bread man truly partakes of the immortality, of the splendour and of the unending life of the glorified Body of Christ.

St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, who is known to many as "The Doctor of the Holy Eucharist," also claims for this August Sacrament an immense share in the nourishing of man's supernatural life. "The body of man," says he, "being subject to death and having no life of itself needs leaven from a body sinless and full of life in order to be capable of receiving life everlasting." [1] Elsewhere in the same homily St. Chrysostom remarks that God has created a leaven, so to speak, of a particular kind, and has bidden us to consume it in order that we may rid ourselves of our former mortal body and thereby become fitted for life everlasting. Then, after reminding us with what sentiments of piety one must approach the Holy Table, he concludes as follows: "I do not say, therefore, that we should abstain from Holy

[1] Homilia XXIV., Epist. ad Corinth. I, cap. X.

Communion but that we should not receive It lightly and without proper consideration; because while it is dangerous to receive it without due reflection and carelessly, not to receive it at all means hunger and death." [1]

In his Fourth Homily on the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the same Father of the Church calls this Adorable Sacrament "The Life of Grace"; and in his Twenty-eighth Homily on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, he designates It "The Spring of Life." [2]

All these quotations from the patristic authors amply testify that these renowned champions of the Faith in accordance with Our Lord's own utterances held the Blessed Eucharist to be the exclusive source of the supernatural life. This view, moreover, is unequivocally expressed by the noted Jesuit theologian, Father Springer, who writes: "It must, therefore, be accepted as the general teaching of the early Church, that without participation in the Eucharist, one cannot obtain eternal life."

Let us examine what were the motives actuating the Apostles in introducing the practice of

[1] Haec autem dico, non ut non accedamus, sed ne temere et inconsiderate accedamus. Non sicut temere et citra discrimen accedere est periculosum, ita mysticarum illarum coenarum non esse participes, est fames et mors."

[2] Pastor Bonus, Trier, 1922, p. 577.

frequent, even daily, Holy Communion. Were they determined to adopt this policy solely by the positive command of Our Lord, or were they swayed likewise by a firm conviction of the incomparable objective worth of the Eucharist? It is evident that both considerations played their part. Had the early Fathers had at their disposal the theological terminology of today they would surely have formulated their doctrine thus: "S.S. Eucharistia est necessaria ad salutem necessitate medii et praecepti"—(The Most Holy Eucharist is necessary to salvation both as a means to its attainment, and by virtue of a positive command). Obviously the former of these two reasons, that is, the Eucharist's indispensability as a means of salvation, must be accorded logical preference, since it was for this very cause that Our Lord has imposed upon us the obligation of approaching the Holy Table. In other words the Eucharist is necessary to salvation not only because Christ Himself has instituted It and has ordered us to receive It, but furthermore, because Christ in instituting this Sacrament and in ordering the faithful to partake of It, did so for the precise reason that It is of its very nature necessary for the attaining of eternal beatitude.

In later ages with the advent of scholasticism it became imperative to devise a genuinely scientific terminology whereby scholars would be enabled to express with nice precision the numerous elusive notions entering into a discussion of this subject. Prior to this development, however, more than a few theologians, through the ambiguity arising from their inexact modes of speech, might readily have been understood as arguing for the absolute necessity of the Eucharist. These writers made themselves responsible for statements, to which, in view of the definitions of the Council of Trent, no orthodox Catholic of our own day would think of subscribing. For example, St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, expressed himself thus: "To this Body of Christ, resurrected from the earth and now glorified in Heaven, shall no one come, either now or in the future, unless he shall have taken pains, while here upon earth to eat His Body and to drink His Blood in a salutary manner." [1]

To such dangerous expressions an end was at last put by the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas. While comparing the words of Christ on the necessity of Baptism (John: III, 5) with

[1] Oratio XXVI, (P.L., 158916).

his words on the necessity of the Eucharist, (John: VI, 54), St. Thomas says: "This word of God is to be understood of spiritual consumption also, and not of sacramental consumption alone." [1]

Similarly, in another instance he clarifies the distinction between the real sacramental Holy Communion and the simple desire to receive It. Here, too, he makes the assertion that without the desire to partake of the Blessed Eucharist no one can be saved.[2] On the contrary, says the Angelic Doctor, the actual receiving of the Sacrament is not, strictly speaking, indispensable: "Spiritual incorporation with Christ can take place without sacramental consumption; and therefore it is not needful that the Sacrament actually be received to attain salvation" (de necessitate salutis).[3]

The Oecumenical Council of Trent utilized the works of the scholastic philosophers and approved their differentiation of Holy Communion into the purely sacramental, the purely spir-

[1] S. Thomae Aquinatis Summa Theologiæ, Pars III, questio 65, art. 4: "Illud verbum Domini (John VI, 54) est intelligendum de spirituali manducatione et non de sola sacramentali."

[2] S. Th. p. III., q. 79. a. 1.

[3] S. Th. IV. Sententiarum Distinctio, 9, a. 1: "Incorporatio spiritualis ad Christum potest esse sine manducatione sacramentali; et ideo non oportet, quod sit sacramenti susceptio de necessitate salutis."

itual, and the sacramental and spiritual combined: "However, as regards the manner of receiving this Sacrament the Fathers have rightly and wisely drawn a triple distinction. They taught that some receive it only sacramentally, such as sinners; that others receive it only spiritually, that is, those who by desire eating of this celestial bread reap the fruit and advantage thereof; and that still others receive it at once sacramentally and spiritually." [1]

After this elucidation the Council proceeds to state explicitly that children are not obligated to sacramental Holy Communion! "The Holy Synod teaches that children lacking the use of reason are by no necessity obligated to the sacramental Communion of the Eucharist." [2]

Conversely, the contrary opinion the Council condemned as heretical: "If any one shall say that the Communion of the Eucharist is neces-

[1] Sess. 13, 8: "Quoad usum autem recte et sapienter Patres nostri tres rationes hoc Sacramentum accipiendi distinxerunt: quosdam enim docuerunt sacramentaliter dumtaxat id sumere, ut peccatores; alios tantum spiritualiter, illos nimirum, qui voto (proposito) illum coelestem panem edentes-fructum eius et utilitatem sentiunt; tertios porro sacramentaliter simul et spiritualiter."

[2] Sess. 13, 4: "S. Synodus docet parvulos usu rationis carentes nulla obligari necessitate ad sacramentalem Eucharistiae communionem."

sary to children before attaining the years of discretion, let him be anathema." [1]

At the same time the Council freely admitted that the early rulers of the Church had sufficient cause for tolerating the practice of giving Holy Communion to children prior to the development of their reasoning powers.[2]

These pronouncements of Trent were soon to be supplemented by a set of practical instructions contained in the Roman Catechism which was published for the use of pastors some three years after the Council's closing. The Roman Catechism reiterates the distinction between the Sacramental and the Spiritual Communion. It explains, furthermore, that the state of grace is a prerequisite for the worthy reception of Sacramental Communion, whereas, conversely, the desire of Holy Communion is itself a prerequisite of the state of grace: "As to the teaching that the Eucharist bestows grace—this is taught for the reason that even the first grace, wherewith all must be endowed before they may dare to touch with their lips the Holy Eucharist if they would avoid eating and drinking judg-

[1] Sess. 21, 5: "Si quis dixerit parvulos antequam ad annos discretionis pervenerint, necessariam esse Eucharistiae communionem A.S."
[2] Sess. 21, cap. 4: "Neque ideo damnanda est antiquitas, si eum morem servavit."

ment to themselves, is granted to no man, unless he receive this Sacrament in desire and in intention, for it is the end of all the sacraments." [1]

On reviewing the direction in which the teaching of theologians with regard to Baptism and to the Eucharist was slowly evolving we reach the conclusion that the now existing clear concepts have resulted from convergent lines of argumentation which eventually reached the same end. Reasoning logically the schoolmen came to the conclusion that the absolute prerequisite of both Sacraments is the wish for their reception; which desire may, should actual receiving prove impossible, effectively supply for the Sacrament, and bring to the earnest soul the same benefits as the physical reception thereof.

However, the desire for the Holy Eucharist carries a deeper meaning than the desire for Baptism since it is really the foundation of supernatural life and the very beginning of holiness. Nevertheless, it is absolutely necessary that the baptismal rite, or should impossibility preclude its reception, the desire for Baptism, should bring the first grace.

[1] Catechismus Romanus, Pars II, caput IV, num. 50: "Quod dicitur Eucharistia gratiam tribui—hoc ideo dictum est, quoniam prima etiam gratia (qua omnes praeditos esse oportet, antequam sanctam Eucharistiam ore contingere audeant, ne judicium sibi manducant et bibant) nemini tribuitur, nisi hoc ipsum sacramentum desiderio et voto percipiat. Est enim omnium sacramentorum finis."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE RELATION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST TO BAPTISM AND TO THE WHOLE ECONOMY OF SANCTIFICATION.

From what has been already stated it follows that the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist are not independent of each other as means of sanctification but that together they constitute an organic unit. Holiness has its beginning in faith in God and in love of Him and in the desire of being united with Him. The concrete manifestation of such interior dispositions is Baptism, which, in accordance with the will of the Redeemer, sanctifies the soul; and the outward symbol of this inward sanctification is the ablution. Now since "the Sacraments produce what they signify," Baptism might seem to effect only the cleansing of the soul from original sin, or in the case of adults, from actual sins as well. But since the Providence of God has left no intermediate condition between the state of sin and the state of grace it is evident that the sanctification of the soul occurs simultaneously

with the remission of its guilt. Yet this deduction in no way refutes our contention that Baptism sanctifies the soul only because of its desire for the Holy Eucharist; as of itself Baptism merely removes the principal obstacle to union with God, mortal sin; whereas, Baptism together with a desire for Holy Communion, is equivalent to the receiving of the Lord "in voto et desiderio." Hence is derived Baptism's power to impart the first grace or sanctifying grace. In the case of infants, of course, the Church herself supplies the requisite desire.[1]

These two Sacraments, therefore, are by no means of equal importance, Baptism being in reality only a preparation for the Holy Eucharist and the latter being the chief aim and center of all those outward signs of inward grace instituted by Christ for our salvation.

Let us here make a brief recapitulation of the sacramental system. Both Sacraments of the Dead, namely, Baptism and Penance, remove from the soul the stain of mortal sin, the sole obstacle to the worthy reception of the Eucharist, and impart the first grace which every communicant must possess before daring to approach the Holy Table if he would escape the

[1] S. Th. Pars III, q. 90. a. 2.

condemnation of those who eat and drink judgment to themselves.[1] Confirmation augments the spiritual powers of man in order that by courageously professing his Faith and by offering vigorous resistance to temptation, he may show himself worthy of union with Jesus. Holy Orders provides the Church with Bishops, Priests and Deacons, who are primarily ministers of the Eucharist. Matrimony is designed to increase the number of those who worship the Eucharist to insure their adequate religious training and in this way to spread Its cult. Lastly, Extreme Unction constitutes the link uniting the earthly span of the Christian, spent, let us hope, in adoration of the Veiled Majesty of the Altar, with that unending enjoyment of the Beatific Vision which Christ has unequivocally promised to those that feed upon the Bread of Life.

The Most Blessed Eucharist is thus seen to be the very center of all religious life as well.[2] Such was the understanding of the primitive Christians. "The whole Church and the entire structure of religious life were based upon the Holy Eucharist. To practice the Faith, to be a

[1] Catechismus Rom., P. II, cap. IV.
[2] Oswald: Sacramentenlehre S. 128: "Man könnte die ordentliche Strasse des sacramentalen Lebens nennen, während die übrigen Sakramente mehr Seiten, und Nebenwege bezeichnen."

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Christian and a member of the Church meant to participate in the Eucharist, not only as a Sacrifice but as a Sacrament. All present at the celebration of the Mass received Holy Communion and to fail to do so would have been considered as involving an inconsistency.

"At the outset the penalty for this offence was excommunication; and excommunication was at that time considered to be what it actually is, namely, exclusion from the Holy Table with all the consequences of such exclusion. . . . The catechumens were not numbered among the faithful, and were not members of the Church, because they were not as yet receiving Holy Communion. The Disciplina Arcani was concealing from them a great secret, that of the union with God the essence of which is our receiving Him in the Eucharist. However, at the moment of the catechumen's admission to membership, the veil was lifted and before the eyes of the surprised neophyte there appeared the Eucharist as the whole content of Christianity. Baptism was only the gate to the Blessed Eucharist, only the preparation for It. To be baptized meant to desire Holy Communion, to possess the right to receive the Eucharist. The entire life of the early Christians was centered about

the Blessed Eucharist. Why? Because sanctity, according to the New Testament, depends upon our being united with Christ, forming one body with Him, and thereby being united also to the Holy Ghost, and through Him obtaining supernatural life. The Blessed Eucharist is the most practical means for the sanctification of the individual and It is the foundation and safeguard of his religious life." [1]

It is, furthermore, the basis of the entire scheme of man's redemption. "God created man for life everlasting and decreed that he become immortal by eating the fruit of the tree of life. However, man gave ear to the counsels of the devil, ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, and thus fell under the domination of death. It was, therefore, in conformity with God's justice that man gain victory over death by again eating and so recover life. . . . But neither in Heaven nor on earth does there exist a food capable of repairing so grave an injury. Accordingly, then, Life Himself became incarnate and gave Himself as food to mortals in order to neutralize the poison consumed until such time as mortals should be transformed into the Flesh of Him who is Life Himself." Thus the plan of the re-

[1] Pastor Bonus, Trier, 1912-13, p. 577 ff.

demption is described by Honorious Augustodunus,[1] who claims as his authorities the Pauline epistles and the whole patristic tradition.

This concept of the design of redemption is again set forth by the same author in the following words: "Even as all food eaten is transformed into our flesh, so the Church is, by this Food, transformed into the Body of Christ. . . . and as the Father remains in the Son, and as the Son remains in the Father in so far as the Divine nature is concerned, so also Christ, as man, really remains in the Church, and on the other hand, the Church by receiving this Food, naturally remains in Christ. Wherefore do we call Him the Mediator between God and man. . . . nevertheless no man is transubstantiated into Christ in the sense that he according to his nature can be called the Son of the Blessed Virgin, as the Son of God, but merely in the sense that as each and everyone unites with God through faith and love, so too do we all, by consuming this Food, unite with the human nature of Christ, and thus naturally will each one of us, as a part of Him, inherit the celestial glory of the Son of God."

[1] Honorius Augustodunus: Operum pars IV. (Dogmatica et Ascetica):—"Eucharistion" Caput 1-3 (P.L. 172, 1250-1252).

# PART II.

## THE HOLY EUCHARIST AS A CURE FOR THE SOUL'S INFIRMITIES.

# CHAPTER I.

## THE INFLUENCE OF HOLY COMMUNION ON MAN DURING THE SEVERAL STAGES OF LIFE.

The Fathers of the Church often availed themselves of the striking analogy between the Most Holy Eucharist as the food of the soul and the daily bread as the food of the body. By comparison with the effects produced in the human organism by our natural food, they were wont to explain the supernatural effects produced in us by the Blessed Sacrament. We shall ourselves profit throughout this essay by this patristic simile.

The needs of the human organism are not always the same; they vary with the changing stages of life; and the same food produces different results dependently upon the age of the person taking it and upon his peculiar bodily requirements. In children the effects of food are manifest mainly in the growth of the body. In youth, in addition to enlarging the body, food strengthens and perfects it. In middle age it

restores the energy lost during labor. In old age it simply maintains life.

The soul also passes through various stages of development and consequently experiences divers needs; for all of which Our Lord has made suitable provision in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

The Holy Eucharist may also be fittingly compared with the sun. The sun is, to be sure, ever the same; yet, during the successive seasons of the year its influence is productive of different effects according to the timely needs of nature. So likewise the Holy Eucharist; for though Itself immutable, It produces in Its devout recipients different effects according to the requirements of their age. These different sacramental graces, though especially suited to the needs of various periods of life, are not of course absolutely restricted to such periods since they make themselves manifest wherever the welfare of the soul may require their bestowal.

The changing needs of the soul during the successive stages of life suggest the divisions of this part of the present work. But why should our material be so divided; to satisfy an idle caprice? No; but for very practical reasons and as a result of years of pastoral experience. For

not only the author, but countless other priests as well, have had occasion to observe that instruction regarding the fruits of Holy Communion are by no means as profitable when given in a general way as when due reference is made to the specific actual graces bestowed by the Eucharist according to the age and condition of the recipient. When this method of presenting the Church's doctrine on the Eucharist is neglected, it is noticeable that the individual members of the congregation all too frequently fail to apply to themselves the words of the preacher's exhortation, and that pretexts for the neglect of Holy Communion are rife.

The young are then prone to defer the habit of frequent Holy Communion with the evasion: "Let older persons practise the devotion, for it is they who should think of eternity"; while their elders resignedly say: "It is now too late to change our mode of living." These worthless excuses soon vanish, however, when the preacher takes care to present his facts concretely so that his audience will not fail to grasp, on the one hand how different are the needs of the soul in different stages and conditions of life, and on the other, how varied are the actual graces flowing

from the Blessed Eucharist and how admirably adapted for satisfying these manifold needs.

For the method of preaching here advocated the Roman Catechism is, at least in part, authority. The Roman Catechism instructs parish priests as follows: "Since the immeasurable benefits of the Holy Eucharist cannot be explained in one sermon, the pastor should explain them carefully in parts. In this manner they will be able to make clear to their audiences the great variety of graces contained in this Sacrament." [1]

[1] Pars II. c. IV.

# (A) THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST AND THE CHILD.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CHILD.

Contemporary educators are wont, and not without reason, to designate the era in which we live as "the child's age." The epithet is most certainly highly appropriate in view of the vast number of intellectuals who have interested themselves in the upbringing of youth, and who have devoted themselves without reserve to their chosen cause, often giving proof of the sincerity of their devotion by the notable self-sacrifice and financial disadvantage which their elected profession has entailed. Of this host of educators some are endeavoring so to influence the whole system of instruction as to make it more adapted to the demands of modern life; while others are striving for the furtherance of certain particular notions, political, sociological or technical, whose adoption they consider would be of immense benefit to society. As a result of this intensive experimentation a new impetus has been

given the science of pedagogy which has been diligently revised in every detail. The psychology of the child has therefore ceased to be a matter of guesswork; but is now based upon an immense amount of certified data, not purely psychological alone, but physiological as well. Hence it is not without much justification that our present century has been styled "the child's age."

However, solicitude for the child and for his peculiar wants is no novelty whatever to the Catholic Church; since from the day of her establishment she has ever hearkened to the behest of her Divine Founder and has lavished upon those of tender years her most especial care. It is Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself Who in the following passage of Holy Writ discloses to us the gravity of our obligation toward the young: "He that shall receive one such little child in My Name, receiveth Me. But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea." (Matt.: XVIII, 5-6). There are, it is true, some exegetists who do not take the quoted words in their most literal sense, but rather interpret

them as referring to Christians in general regardless of their age, who with childlike humility and simplicity of heart accept God's revelation.[1]

The significance of the passage, however, is not lessened by this interpretation, since Our Lord here and elsewhere in the Gospels holds up the childlike spirit as an exemplar for the emulation of all Christians, and this teaching of Christ was sufficient in the case of the early faithful to change their former pagan attitude of unconcern toward the young into a new and Christlike attitude of active charity. Two other pronouncements of Our Blessed Lord are here cited as being pertinent: "Amen I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children you can not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." (Matt.: XVIII, 3). . . "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of God. Amen I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter into it." (Mark: X, 14-15). Why, we may ask, should a child be deemed worthy of so much consideration? For a further answer, let us examine its development.

[1] Allioli: Op. cit., 446-7.

During the first four or five years of life, the mind of the child is dormant. It perceives the outside world by means of its external senses and what it chances to see others doing, it imitates. It accepts its sense perceptions without question or criticism, never for a moment doubting their conformity with objective reality. Thanks to this complete confidence in its perceptions, and to its unimpaired nervous and sensory mechanism the child quickly increases its store of immediate knowledge. However, it does not as yet have either reasoning power or free will which might sometimes lead it to pursue courses quite at variance with those indicated by the senses. As a consequence, to impute moral responsibility to a child of such age would be altogether absurd. The actions of such a child, whatever they may be, are neither moral nor immoral; they are simply non-moral; the only conceivable motives for its actions being either the example of those about it, or the command of parents or guardians.

At about the age of five the child's mind commences to function. The child begins to classify its own acts and those of others in accordance with the ethical rules already proposed to it and so passes judgment upon them. It now recognizes

the distinction between good and bad, and incapable of comprehending a middle course or of making allowance for extenuating circumstances, it judges its fellow men by their overt acts alone. Also it is often much preoccupied with religious matters and apprehending the fundamental truths of faith and ethics it becomes responsible to its conscience for its deeds. The conscience of the child now adverts to the moral worth of its acts as good or bad.

It is the general consensus of theologians, however, that notwithstanding this first awakening of the moral sense, the child between the ages of five and seven ordinarily remains incapable of the full deliberation and of the full malice essential to the commission of mortal sin; and that this condition, dependently upon individual development, may continue until the age of eight or nine. Still, it cannot be gainsaid, that the frequent commission of venial sin brings about a grave impairment of the will, and so disposes it to the commission of mortal sin. The child's conscience is dulled by repeated failure to heed its admonitions and in this way an inclination towards evil takes root and a definite psychic technique in wrong directions is set up. It thus becomes increasingly difficult to overcome in-

herent and acquired disposition toward unrighteousness.

At this age fortunately sensual desires are still in abeyance and have as yet no power to interfere with the child's religious education which parents and teachers should now prosecute to the utmost. Adequate religious training at this stage is of the greatest moment, for just as under favorable circumstances the organism of the child stores up in the first two periods of life quantities of fat in order that it may have a reserve against sudden growth or other emergency, so also should the child at the same time be enabled to accumulate a copious reservoir of faith, love of God, humility and holiness to serve in days to come as an armour of defense against sinful desires and against all temptations. Let us not, however, fall into the error of imagining that every child is a veritable angel at this age; for the painstaking researches of modern pedagogy unmistakably confirm the teaching of revelation on the corruption of human nature through original sin. Even the very young have their spiritual sufferings and their faults.

All too often it comes to pass that children inherit from their parents various diseases, pulmonary, venereal or otherwise, or a more or less

irrepressible craving for alcoholic stimulants; and it is a matter of empirical knowledge that the offspring of parents so afflicted are usually somewhat dull, indolent, sullen, nervous, mischievous and cruel. Again, in some children the so-called psychic mechanism, that is to say, the sensory nerves carrying messages to the brain and the motor nerves transmitting orders from the brain to the muscles, fail occasionally to function properly. Subjects so handicapped are apt to be quarrelsome, mendacious, given to flattery, suspicious and selfish. Other unlovely characteristics of the same category of children are thievishness, disobedience, stubbornness, haughtiness, enviousness, vindictiveness, ingratitude, vulgarity, immodesty, and lack of will power.[1]

These inherent defects alone, even without the active coöperation of an evil world or of the powers of darkness, are quite competent to lead the child into the ways of iniquity; hence it is incumbent upon parents and guardians to remedy them in so far as may be possible. As the above mentioned physical imperfections, that is those constituting the first group, are plainly evils in themselves, and as they are in so many

[1] Cfr. Strümpel—Spitzner: Pädagogische Pathologie.

cases the contributing cause of worse evils in the moral order—it is the object of all systems of education to eradicate them.

Secular pedagogy strongly advises medical treatment, calisthenics and a study of hygiene: a programme which is surely eminently rationable and laudable. However, the defects enumerated in the second group, being moral in their nature, if they are to be overcome at all, must yield to remedies themselves of the moral order. Such fitting remedies are: good example, admonition, encouragement, and censure when deserved. We have, moreover, through God's providence supernatural means for combating these ills, namely: prayer, and the graces obtainable through the Sacraments, most especially that of the Blessed Eucharist.

The third period of the child's life is that preceding puberty. In the generality of cases this period endures for three years, though improper rearing may curtail it, not as regards the development of the body, but rather as regards the development of the soul. Bad company may during this stage alienate the child from religion, make it a skeptic and so ruin it forever; as under normal conditions the mind now develops more rapidly than the body and a

child of from ten to twelve is able to reason fairly logically but not necessarily always to reach true conclusions. Conversely, the child through careful rearing may attain considerable mental development. Its sensual desires are still dormant.

Throughout this stage parents and guardians should see to it, on the one hand that the child remains merely a child as long as possible, and on the other that its character and its sense of moral responsibility, its conscience, assume definite form. Here again the Most Blessed Sacrament will be found to be the most potent educational medium.

What are the fruits of Holy Communion which we must take into consideration in having recourse to the Eucharist for the religious education of our children? First of all, these: the Blessed Eucharist—(1) cures the ailments of the body; (2) remits venial sins; (3) fortifies the recipient against mortal sin.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST CURES THE BODY.

Only once do the Scriptures mention the beneficial effects of Holy Communion upon the body and this single reference explains these effects only partially and in a negative manner. In a passage found in the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, the great Apostle of the Gentiles inveighs against the crime of unworthily receiving Holy Communion, subjoining the warning: "Therefore there are many infirm and weak among you and many sleep" (XI, 30). The erudite exegetist Migne explains the word "sleep" paraphrastically: "And they die a premature death." Migne further writes: "As Ananias and Sapphira were punished by death for concealing funds and for lying, as an example to others, similarly many Corinthians were punished with different misfortunes and illnesses and even with death for unworthily partaking of Holy Communion to serve as a warning to others and to prove that the Christian religion is true." St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury,

states that "even now there are many that after Easter fall a prey to different diseases, because they receive the Body of Christ unworthily." [1]

The Sacred Liturgy, that ancient witness to ecclesiastical tradition, provides a fuller explanation, warning that physical as well as spiritual ills may be the punishment of him who approaches the Holy Table unworthily, and affirming the doctrine that the body as well as the soul of the worthy partaker of the Eucharist may share in rich blessings. St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Constantinople, in his Canon of the Mass for the Greek Rite prescribes the prayer: "O Our God, afflict not any of us . . . with illness either of soul or body for unworthily receiving Holy Communion." St. John Chrysostom, a later Archbishop of Constantinople, amplifies the thought of St. Basil's prayer with the petition "that Holy Communion may become a cure for soul and body." This supplication is also made during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass according to the Greek Rite; but the Latin Liturgy is no less explicit in asseverating the efficacy of this August Sacrament in curing bodily ills. In the unvarying Canon of the Mass, according to the Roman

[1] Migne: Cursus S. Scripturae, vol. 24, p. 578.

Rite, the celebrant is directed immediately before "Domine, non sum dignus" to pray: "Let not the partaking of Thy Body, O Lord Jesus Christ, which I, though unworthy, presume to receive, turn to my judgment and condemnation; but by Thy mercy be it profitable to the safety and health both of soul and body." [1]

Again in the Proper of the Roman Mass for the Thursday of the fifth week of Lent we read: "Let Thy Sacraments fill us with spiritual strength and be helpful to the body." In brief, the student of the liturgy need never be at a loss for texts in which this aspect of the Holy Eucharist is clearly expressed.

Furthermore, it is the consensus of theological opinion that through Holy Communion bodily health may be restored. While discussing the healing of the woman troubled with a long-standing issue of blood (Matt.: IX, 20-23), St. Peter Chrysologus adds: "What a lofty lesson is taught us by this woman concerning the value of Christ's body! From the hem of Christ's garment came this enormous strength. Listen to this, O ye Christians, who daily touch

[1] "Perceptio Corporis Tui, Domine Jesu Christe, quod ego indignus sumere praesumo, non mihi proveniat in judicium et condemnationem sed pro tua pietate prosit mihi ad tutamentum mentis et corporis et ad medelam percipiendam. . . ."

the Body of Christ: What a powerful remedy you may obtain through Him!" [1] St. Theresa, too, is a witness in narrating that Holy Communion helped her time and again during her illnesses and sufferings. To quote still another theologian, Cardinal de Lugo rightly argues: "If the Sacrament of Extreme Unction has power to cure the body, this must be true in greater measure of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist." [2] The Roman Missal furthermore informs us that Holy Communion guarantees the glorious resurrection of the body: "Let this Thy Sacrament, O Lord, protect our souls and bodies that both may be saved and may enjoy the fullness of heavenly bliss." Obviously, then, the Eucharist can be still more helpful to us in this life.

All this being so, it certainly behooves us to see that young children, whom God may have in any manner committed to our care, are brought frequently to the Holy Table, there to find in the Mystic Feast a cure for bodily ills which are in turn the cause of a multitude of psychic disturbances. This course seems the more urgent and rational when we reflect that since original

[1] Sermo 34. (P.G. 52—297).
[2] Disp. 12., Sect. 5.

sin, the source of all the maladies now vexing mankind, was of the spiritual order, it is most appropriate that they should be healed by means of a spiritual remedy.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST REMITS VENIAL SINS.

As we have already seen, a child normally remains incapable of committing mortal sin until the age of seven, and in some retarded cases until the age of nine. This is manifestly so for the reason that such a child is unable to comprehend the malice of sin and therefore its will cannot entirely turn away from God.

None the less it stands much in need of a cure for those venial sins, which, through lightness of mind, it may be committing at every step: and Holy Communion remits venial sin.

It is axiomatic that God and sin, being diametrically opposed to each other, cannot coexist. The hypostatic union of the human and the divine natures in the person of Christ placed Our Lord, as man, on so lofty a pinnacle of sanctity as utterly to preclude the remotest possibility of His committing any act akin to venial sin. Too, the predestined incarnation of the Son of God in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary

necessitated her being immune from the very moment of her Immaculate Conception, from the power of evil; and this immunity was necessarily so preserved that during her entire life she incurred no guilt whatsoever. From our principle, therefore, which we have stated above, and from these two specific instances, we are justified in deducing that at the instant of worthily receiving the Most Holy Eucharist, the soul, through its union with God Almighty, is automatically cleansed from venial sins.

This truth was solemnly proclaimed by the Church in the Oecumenical Council of Trent: "The Saviour willed, therefore, that we receive this Sacrament . . . as a means whereby we are freed from the guilt of daily trespasses";[1] but the Tridentine definition merely placed the stamp of infallibility upon a view which had been upheld by the Catholic Church from the earliest ages. This is proved absolutely from the text of the Canon of the Mass according to the Greek Rite, both in the prayer of the celebrant immediately preceding the Pater Noster and in the formula for the distribution of Holy Communion, since both these passages mention the

[1] Trid. Sess. 13 c. 2: "Sumi autem voluit (Salvator) Sacramentum hoc . . . tamquam antidotum quo liberamur a culpis quotidianis."

remission of venial sin as one of the graces of the Sacrament, the former of these petitions reading: "O Lord, Thou Lover of mankind . . . make us worthy of receiving Thy heavenly and awful Sacrament for the remission of our sins and transgressions."

To the same effect the Fathers of the Church express themselves in their theological works. In the pages of St. John Chrysostom we read: "This Bread is the salvation of our soul; through it is our soul cleansed and adorned." [1] And in view of these salutary results St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, bids us to daily reception, saying: "Receive daily what daily brings thee good." [2] Later he adds: "Because I sin daily, I must take a cure daily." [3]

It is true that there are other means for obtaining the forgiveness of venial sins, principally the Sacrament of Penance; but also prayer, acts of faith, hope, charity and contrition; the pious use of sacramentals approved by the Church, and in general, all meritorious deeds. However, of all these means, Holy Communion is the most efficacious and it is surely the most appropriate for children, since it possesses the power to blot

[1] Homilia 46 in Johannen (Patrologia Graeca, V. 59, p. 261).
[2] De Sacramentis Liber 5, caput 4.
[3] De Sacramentis Liber 4, cap. 5. (P.L. 16. 446).

out venial sins even without contrition; for whoever desires Holy Communion with all Its fruits, and simultaneously resolves to avoid even venial sins, receives remission of all venial sins though he may experience no particular feeling of contrition. Holy Communion is, therefore, the means most appropriate for the soul of the child as yet incapable of thorough self-analysis. To the child the counsel of St. Augustine is fittingly applied: "Even if you sin daily, provided only your sins be not grave, go peacefully to Holy Communion." [1]

The preceding paragraphs have outlined the direct effect of the Blessed Eucharist in regard to venial sin; but there is likewise an indirect effect. Holy Communion received with devotion awakens in the soul supernatural sentiments, notably love of God and perfect contrition, in virtue of which the soul of the recipient earns for itself the forgiveness of sins and the lessening of temporal punishment, especially that in purgatory.

[1] Tractatus 26. in Evang. Joannis, caput 6 (P.L. V. 35-1611).

## CHAPTER V.

### THE HOLY EUCHARIST IS A SHIELD AGAINST MORTAL SIN.

The above mentioned truth was defined by the Council of Trent (Sess. 13, c.2), but had been the uniform teaching of the Church from the beginning. The patristic authors illustrated the efficacy of the Eucharist through Its analogy to bread. Bread is the most indispensable article of nourishment—the symbol of food in general. Not only does bread serve to satisfy hunger, but it also strengthens the body and gives it the power to resist harmful influences from without. In like manner the Blessed Eucharist fortifies the soul, rendering it immune from external evil influences and strong to combat inner evil inclinations.

Our faith in this effect of Holy Communion is securely grounded upon the utterance of Our Lord: "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life. . . ."[1] for obviously enough he would not have life everlast-

[1] John: VI, 55.

ing who is not saved from falling into mortal sin.

In view of all these considerations we may well agree that Holy Communion fully meets the needs of the child's soul. As we have noted, the child is usually free from mortal sin; nevertheless, the danger constantly threatens. Parents, therefore, ought not to depend too much upon their knowledge of the principles of pedagogy or upon their instinct or upon the love of the child; but should rely for the most part upon this supernatural aid to the formation of Christian character, which is so unequivocally recommended to us by Our Divine Lord Himself.

The current phrase "The Child's Age" will acquire its full significance only when pedagogy comes to be based on the principle that the worthy and habitual reception of the Holy Communion is indeed the most potent factor in the education of youth.

There remains only the task of determining, at least approximately, at what age the average child attains such development of its reasoning powers that it may and should adopt the practice of frequent Holy Communion. This is a topic which has challenged the attention of

many weighty writers down through the ages and in the treatment of which a definite evolution of theological thought is discernible. This evolution we shall now briefly recapitulate.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE HISTORY OF THE HOLY COMMUNION OF CHILDREN.

During the apostolic age and for a long time subsequently the custom obtained of administering Holy Communion to children, even infants, as well as to adults. It was the established principle that all present at Mass were to receive Holy Communion, and children were not excluded; in fact we know that in some regions they were accorded the distinction of approaching the altar immediately after the clergy. Holy Communion was given to infants immediately after their Baptism, and at the hour of death children, however young, were fortified with the Viaticum. The only ritualistic peculiarity regarding the communicating of infants, say liturgical writers, was that they, for reasons of expediency, received the Blessed Sacrament under the species of wine alone.

This primitive usage lasted for many centuries. Pope St. Gregory the Great in his celebrated sacramentary warns mothers to refrain

from feeding their babies during the interval between their Baptism and their reception of Holy Communion; and, as a rule, all rituals antedating the thirteenth century mention the communicating of infants. However, as time went on, this practice gradually fell into disuse throughout the Latin Church until, beginning with the eleventh century, various diocesan synods and provincial councils recommended the communicating of children only after their attaining the use of reason.

In the year 1215 the Fourth Oecumenical Council of the Lateran decreed that all the faithful having reached the age of reason should receive the Blessed Eucharist during the Paschal season; but concerning children nothing was enacted. By this eloquent silence the Council made it understood that it had no wish to perpetuate the ancient usage of admitting to the Holy Table children below the age of reason. The Council of Trent, however, in a very direct pronouncement, disposed of the question for all time; for, while recognizing that the early custom of communicating infants was not devoid of merit, it ruled that for the protection of the Sacred Species from even unintentional desecration, the communicating of

children not enjoying the use of reason should be thereafter prohibited. At first glance this ruling might seem explicit enough; but on reflection we recall that the reasoning powers do not make their appearance suddenly in a single moment, but slowly throughout the course of a few years. In view of this fact how are we to interpret the phrase "use of reason"? Should we take it to mean the initial stages or the full development of the mental faculties?

About the time of the Lateran Council the notion began to spread that while for sacramental Confession the beginnings of reason, such as are found in a child of from seven to nine years would suffice,—for the reception of Holy Communion a higher intellectual development is to be insisted upon, in order that the communicant should be able to comprehend the general teachings of Faith, which ordinarily becomes possible between the ages of ten and fourteen. This erroneous opinion operated greatly to the child's detriment in more ways than one. For instance, when a child died before receiving its first Holy Communion, it died also without receiving the Sacrament of Extreme Unction; and funeral services for such a child did

not contain prayers for forgiveness of temporal punishment but simply committed the soul of the deceased to God's Providence, in the hope that the soul, according to God's unfailing promise, would inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

Some ecclesiastics interpreted the edict of the Lateran Council as requiring the plenary use of reason even for the reception of the Sacrament of Penance; and though there were not lacking priests who permitted children to confess quite early, these priests considered such confession as merely a preparation for the Sacrament. Accordingly young penitents were leaving the confessional merely with the blessing of the priest and not with absolution, which they received only just prior to their first Holy Communion.

The worst result of this practice was that it failed to preserve the purity of children, as the means most appropriate to this end were in disuse. Under this lax system the child would at first fall into venial sin and then into grave sin, living for an extended period in constant danger of death while in the latter condition. True it is, that pastors strove to make reparation, as it were, for this deplorable deferment of the sacraments, by the impressive solemnity with which

they surrounded the eventual reception of First Holy Communion. No effort was spared to make that day one long to be held in eager anticipation by the youthful candidates and one also to be regarded in later years as without exception the sweetest of life's memories. Not alone the inspiring ritual employed contributed to this end, but also the massing together of large groups of children, all animated by the same pious sentiments, and the fervid exhortations addressed to them from the pulpit, in the confessional, and by parents and friends. However this beautiful ceremony came entirely too late fully to achieve its purpose, for all too often by that time the soul of the child had become lamentably corrupted. The occasion was quite likely to produce only a superficial impression on the minds of the communicants, and in many cases it failed to restore to the child its lost conscience.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE DECREE "QUAM SINGULARI."

It was only on the eighth of August, 1910, that the decree "Quam Singulari," initiated by His Holiness, Pope Pius X, and elaborated under his direction by the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments, was promulgated. This edict finally settled the vexed question of the age at which children are to be admitted to the Holy Table in enjoining parents and confessors to see to it that the children under their charge receive the Eucharist as soon as they are capable of thinking rationally, that is to say, at about the age of seven years and sometimes even earlier. According to the terms of the decree it suffices that the child, conformably to the limitations of its age, apprehend the more important truths of Faith, even though incapable of clearly expressing them in its own words, provided only it be able to distinguish the Eucharist Bread from the daily bread and to arouse within itself religious feelings.

By way of illustrating the degree of mental

and spiritual development demanded by the Church, let us cite an example: The same saintly Vicar of Christ who issued the "Quam Singulari" decree once had occasion to receive in private audience a certain French lady and her two sons. The boys were aged eight and six years respectively. Availing herself of the rare opportunity, the mother asked His Holiness to be so gracious as to administer First Holy Communion to her elder son. "But what of the other?" replied the Pope. "O Your Holiness," was the mother's rejoinder, "he is still too young." Paying little heed to this protestation, the Pontiff turned and thus addressed the smaller boy: "Listen, my child: Who lives in the tabernacle behind the little golden doors, and Who comes to us in Holy Communion?" "Our Lord God," replied the boy. The Holy Father put a few more simple but pertinent questions to the lad and then exclaimed: "You, too, my dear child, shall receive first Holy Communion from my hands tomorrow, together with your brother."

The conclusion from all this is plain and certain. This matter has been definitely settled, and no one can now claim the right to make it a subject of further controversy. Just as throughout

the entire existence of the Church, sometimes only after age-long disputes and experiments, her several commandments were finally crystallized and formulated, so in the present instance, the question of age and of the moral and intellectual qualifications of the child with regard to first Holy Communion has been forever set at rest by the edict of the illustrious Pius X.

It accordingly behooves parents and pastors to consider it their sacred obligation to make practical application of this Pontifical ruling, and to see to it that the children entrusted to them by the Almighty should be provided every opportunity of fulfilling this their solemn duty towards God at the very outset of their rational life.

After its first Holy Communion, however, the child cannot be permitted to rest on its laurels. On the contrary, the first Holy Communion should be the turning point in the child's career. From that moment on the spiritual life of the child must be intensively cultivated. The provisions of the decree "Quam Singulari" make it incumbent upon pastors and confessors to devote a large measure of care to the needs of the individual child, admitting him to first Holy Communion privately as soon as the requisite

mental development and interior dispositions are adjudged to be present.

Such children as have been thus privately admitted to the Holy Table are not thereupon to be allowed to desist from the study of the catechism, but are to be assembled at frequent intervals for this purpose. Eventually when all the children composing a class have become sufficiently familiar with the catechism, the pastor is directed to arrange for the whole group a general Holy Communion attended by impressive ceremonies. In a normal parish this event should take place several times a year; but it is mandatory that it take place at least once a year.

## (B) THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST AND ADOLESCENCE.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF YOUTH.

Girls at about the age of twelve years and boys about the age of fourteen cease to be children and pass into the period of adolescence—a transitional state which lasts approximately five years. During this time the physical organism so matures as to be enabled to perform its natural function of procreating a new generation and of toiling to insure its maintenance. The body waxes larger and stronger. The convolutions of the brain increase in number and the cortex of the brain hardens. The muscles of the heart grow more powerful, the pulse stronger and more regular, and the entire bodily structure gains in symmetry and strength. The features of the face grow more clearly pronounced. The voice of the girl becomes finer while that of the boy takes on a new depth and resonance.

This visible metamorphosis is a manifestation of still further changes that are simulta-

neously taking place within the soul, and in the generality of cases such physical modifications profoundly affect the soul itself. The childish equilibrium now vanishes. The heart of youth is overcome with a strange unrest; an interior disquiet which educators are wont to liken to the restlessness of birds on the eve of their departure for southern climes.

Furthermore, the life of youth is filled with vivid contrasts. The earlier impulse to ceaseless activity gives way to a feeling of fatigue, and joy yields place to sadness. The trivial chores of the daily routine no longer satisfy the boys. They, as well as some, at least, of their sisters, are eager to undertake the direction of large enterprises. They dream of sweeping reforms, and of radical changes in the whole fabric of human society. To their expanding spirits nothing seems impossible. Youth feels itself intolerably cramped within the limited confines of the family circle and journeys, adventures and inventions are more or less seriously contemplated.

At this stage some boys through free election or through stress of circumstances commence to earn their own living. A vast number of others enrolled in secondary schools are still dependent upon parents for their material support and

remain under the moral guidance of teachers. However, whether financially independent or not, the average boy now acquires a rather exaggerated opinion of his own importance. He often comes to detest authority and bitterly to resent compulsion. Often too, he is overwhelmed with a morbid sense of his own dignity and is tortured with the fear of possible slights to his honour.

These psychic changes deserve our attention not so much for their own sake as because they are the underlying causes of profound moral changes attending this stage of development. In the mind of the youth there are now apt to arise doubts concerning the Faith; for, even when a young man has not fallen into gross sin, he naturally wishes to comprehend the truths of religion and so appeals to logic. When, however, he has grievously fallen, he views religion with its attendant code of ethics as simply an obstacle to the working out of his pragmatic philosophy. Under the influence of sensual desires, pride, and other evil inclinations, such a youth falls into a state of moral laxity and would gladly forget every restriction of divine law. To this type of youth atheism appears to be a psychological necessity.

Still, the experiences of childhood are not entirely obliterated from memory and the youth's former outlook upon life to a certain extent asserts itself; the outcome of the fierce struggle now raging in the soul often depends upon the moral foundations laid by environment in the days of childhood.

The result of this struggle also depends upon the attitude taken toward the youngster by those with whom he now comes in contact, and patient, sympathetic and tactful consideration of his legitimate demands is highly conducive to a happy ending of this period of youthful ardour. On the contrary, under less favorable conditions the youth not infrequently degenerates morally and in some cases meets with a tragic end.

Secular pedagogy is not at a loss to make recommendations for the needs of youth, and the foremost, perhaps, of these is the study of hygiene. However, the results to be achieved through this study are problematical at best, and they are most especially dubious when parents and guardians neglect to insist upon the necessity of frequent Holy Communion. It is accordingly incumbent upon all pastors and

directors of souls constantly to remind parents and guardians of their duty in this respect.

There is, of course, a wide variety of spiritual works that will be found most profitable. For example: the reading of religious books tends to direct noble impulses toward the most worthy goals; biographies of saints and philanthropists may impel the youthful dreamer to set out upon a life of self-sacrifice; Confession at regular intervals affords an opportunity for serious and salutary introspection.

However, by far the most effective balm for this perilous fermentation of body and soul is the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar; and this we conclude from a review of its fruits, some of which are especially suited to the psychology of the adolescent as delineated above. We refer principally to the following dogmatic truths: The Holy Eucharist (1) inhibits carnal desires; (2) actually unites the entire man with Christ; (3) fills the soul with peace and happiness.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST INHIBITS CARNAL DESIRES.

The Scriptures make no specific mention of the salutary effect of Holy Communion now under discussion; but it is the consensus of theological opinion that whenever any mention is made in the Sacred Liturgy of the healing of the body through the reception of the Eucharist we are primarily to understand thereby the inhibition of carnal desires rather than the curing of any particular bodily ailment. St. Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria, in elucidating St. Luke's text (IV, 38) on the cure of St. Peter's mother-in-law, says: "Let us, too, receive Jesus unto us. He will extinguish the fire of lust within us." [1]

In addition, theologians attribute this effect of Holy Communion to the fact that It drives away the devil. St. John Cassianus warns us that Christ's words: "It is not good to take the bread of children and cast it to the dogs" (Matt.: VII, 6) and: "Give not that which is holy to dogs,

[1] Patrologia Graeca, v. 72-552.

neither cast ye your pearls before swine" (Matt.: VII, 6) should not be understood as forbidding the administration of the Eucharist to those possessed by the devil. On the contrary, according to this author, Holy Communion is invaluable in putting the evil one to flight since the devil flees from the Body of Christ as a man would from fire.[1] Other theologians, as for example, Prosper of Acquitaine and Paschasius Radbertus, offer actual facts from life in proof of the thesis that, as the first effect of diabolic possession is the fanning of the flame of carnal desires, so the first effect of the soul's sanctification through Holy Communion is the curbing of lust. Finally our own personal experiences constitute the most cogent proof of the soundness of this thesis.

Youth, therefore, should seek relief from carnal passion in the frequent reception of Holy Communion.

It is very consoling to observe that by no means all of our youth submit unconditionally to the influence of passion; for especially those who in childhood enjoyed the benefits of careful guidance and who entered upon the perilous stage of puberty with a well formed character,

[1] Collatio, pars 7, caput 30 (Patr. Lat. 49-709).

know full well how to repress concupiscence. We note especially that the ranks of high school and college students furnish a large number of idealistic individuals, who at the very moment when others of the same age are sinking into the slough of sensuality soar far above the average young person in point of self-restraint and of noble aspirations. It is at this time, of course, that those who choose the better part make their final decisions regarding their entry into the monastic state or into the secular clergy.

It is worthy of remark that according to the statistics of the year 1905, the youth of the country provide fifty-four percent of the total number of suicides; but it is equally true that during a given time there are throughout the land at least twice as many youthful idealists who bend the head to be tonsored by the Bishops as a visible sign of the heroic sacrifice which they joyfully make for the glory of God and for the good of their fellow men. If such was the proportion of lights and shadows even before the promulgation of the "Quam Singulari" decree—we may rightly suppose, in view of the profound moral effects of this piece of legislation, that since that time the proportion of young men and women devoting their lives to religion to those dying miserably by their own hand has greatly increased.

## CHAPTER X.

### HOLY COMMUNION MOST CLOSELY UNITES MAN TO GOD.

Etymologically speaking "communion" denotes a common participation; but in our present thological sense it refers to that wonderful participation in the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of which we see the first example at the Last Supper. This is not a mere moral union resulting from the submission of one's will to the will of Christ, but it is a real physical union as well whereby the Body of Our Divine Lord is verily united to the body of the recipient and through the body of the recipient, to his soul.

This is the teaching of the Doctor of the Church, St. Hilary, who in his refutation of Arianism says: "The heretics wrongly teach that the union of the Father with the Son consists solely in perfect conformity of will on the part of the two Divine Persons. They cite, as an illustration, our own union with God the Father through the Son, saying that we are united with

Him through religious obedience and through conformity of our will with His. Neither is their assertion true that we are not united with Christ physically by receiving His Body and Blood." [1]

St. John Chrysostom tells us: "Through this Body we are united with Him not only by love but in reality." [2] St. Anselm teaches: "Through Him we sit at the right of the Father, not in the sense that we sit beside Him because of our own merits; but in the sense that we sit there because of the Body of Christ—therefore I say, as we through Christ sit at the right hand of the Father, likewise do we live in Christ because of the union of the body." [3] St. Cyril of Alexandria supplies the graphic figure of our being united with Christ in Holy Communion as two pieces of wax melted together. Again, the Apostle St. Paul is author of the statement that "as a particle of leaven ferments the whole mass of dough, so also a particle of the Eulogia has a similar effect on our bodies . . . and so Christ is in us and we are in Him." [4]

[1] "Naturalis Communionis unitas." De Trinitate, lib. 8. 13-17 (P.L. 10-245).
[2] (P.G. 73-584).
[3] De Fide, 4-10 (P.L. 16-642).
[4] Comment. in Johan. 6.57 (P.G.).

This sacramental union is not a transient one; it is permanent, somatic; that is, the bodily presence of Christ does not cease owing to the chemical decomposition of the appearances of bread and wine, and by reason of this fact the devout Christian is blessed with the constant presence of the Lord. This union of Christ to the Christian is much closer than that of husband to wife or even than that of the twig to the stem. Holy Writ makes the union of Christ with His Church the type of the matrimonial union: "This is a great Sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (Ephesians: V, 32).[1]

Such an understanding of the sacramental union of man with Christ through Holy Communion is unequivocally expressed in a prayer preceding the Pater Noster in the Canon of the Mass according to the Greek Rite. Here God is besought "that having worthily received the Holy Sacrament, and having the living Christ in our hearts we may become temples of the Holy Ghost."

The close union with God made possible through the Blessed Sacrament is especially appealing to uncorrupted idealistic youth, fully

[1] Weigl, Edward: Die Heilslehre des hl. Cyrillus von Alexandrien, 214. Mainz, 1905.

satisfying its lofty aspirations and guiding its noble impulses aright. Under the benign and powerful influence of the Eucharistic Lord the young develop strength and solidity of character; they are devoid of empty, bombastic phraseology; they estimate their own relative abilities quite moderately and they demand much of themselves in the way of high standards of conduct and generous deeds. As frequent communicants the young become seriously conscious of their duties in every relation of life; they become ardent defenders of the Catholic Faith, staunch patriots, and men and women whom no obstacle can swerve from the path of virtue and piety.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE HOLY EUCHARIST BRINGS A SENSE OF JOY AND PEACE.

At two different periods of life does a man especially feel the need of joy and spiritual equipoise, of interior peace—transiently in youth, when physiological disturbances render him the victim of unrest and melancholy, and permanently in old age when the failure of physical powers and the realization of approaching dissolution tend to embitter his soul.

Joy is a characteristic of the Christian as St. Paul indicates in exhorting his converts: "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I say rejoice" (Philippians: IV, 4), and we know that his words did not fall on deaf ears; for history attests that this characteristic was most marked during the violent persecutions of the first three centuries. In the days of the catacombs joy never left the hearts of the faithful, not even in the gloom of the prison or on the bloody sands of the arena—a fact that inflamed some of the

pagans to ungovernable fury while it led others to accept the Gospel.

Joy as an effect of Holy Communion was already foreseen in the act of creation, for we read in Ecclesiasticus: 31, 35: "Wine was created from the beginning to make men joyful"—a metaphor that was repeated by the Fathers of the Church, who were wont to compare the natural joy produced in the body by wine with the supernatural joy caused in our soul by Holy Communion. Pope Eugene IV in his bull "Exultate Deo," explains that the Blessed Eucharist brings about the same effect in our souls as material food in our bodies; and one of these effects is the satisfaction which we experience not only during the act of eating but for some time afterwards. Rightly is the Blessed Sacrament called "Manna," containing in itself all sweetness.

Being assured with its close union with Jesus and of the remission of all sins, the soul of the Christian is filled with joy and peace. Holy Communion elevates our thoughts and desires far above the earthly plane, emancipating us from many cares, especially from unnecessary worries over imaginary troubles; making the real adversities of life more tolerable, and even lessening the fear of death. In view of these

benefits of the Sacrament one can readily comprehend the words of Jesus: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid" (John: XIV, 27). The source of the peace which reigns in the heart of the faithful Christian is not its moral union with Jesus, but rather the physical presence of Jesus within it. Joy and peace are not, to be sure, the primary and inevitable effect of Holy Communion, because the primary and inevitable effect of worthy reception is the increase of sanctifying grace. Joy and peace are but collateral effects for the obtaining of which certain interior dispositions are required, namely devotion and concentration of mind. When these dispositions are lacking, joy and peace will also be lacking.

It is undeniable that sometimes in the case of even the most devout of communicants, human infirmities opposed to the foregoing qualities are manifested, such as impatience, melancholy and pessimism. However, let us not forget that not all individuals are alike; not all are equally endowed by nature, some being always in the best of spirits while others are inclined to be gloomy. Holy Communion does

not ordinarily perform physical miracles; and, while it influences the entire man for good, it does not radically transform the temperament. Yet we can say with perfect assurance that granted good will on the part of the recipient, Holy Communion so strengthens his spiritual powers as to give him the upper hand over his temperament in times of trial and temptation.

Frequent, regular and humble reception of Our Eucharistic Lord, while not always accomplishing spectacular changes at the outset, eventually brings about miraculous results even despite occasional falls from grace. Even as the body in certain illnesses is healed gradually and imperceptibly over long periods of time, so is the soul regenerated and beautified through the Blessed Eucharist.

## (C) THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST IN ADULT LIFE.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE ADULT.

Adult life is the longest and most important period of one's earthly sojourn, lasting longer than all the other stages combined. Moreover, during this entire period in the normal person all the faculties, both physical and spiritual, are fully developed and active. Before attaining this age a man lives for the most part an individual life, and while his youthful mind may contemplate great things, he does in reality, exert but little influence upon his fellow men.

As an adult a person enjoys human rights and privileges to the fullest extent and, while fulfilling his obligations as head of a family and as a member of his profession or calling, he exerts an influence upon all with whom he comes in contact. In proportion to his abilities he makes a greater or less impress upon his spheres of activity, social, commercial or professional;

should he be a dominating character, his viewpoint becomes the viewpoint of those spheres. In rare instances, a mighty leader arises who affects the destiny of nations and leaves his mark upon the pages of history.

On the other hand, an adult is exposed to numerous and serious temptations. He is left to shift for himself, without the well meant advice of others, such as was given him in childhood by parents and teachers, and being left master of his fate, he has greater opportunity of gratifying his fancies.

Briefly speaking, therefore, only an adult is a human in the fullest sense of the term, possessing all the positive and negative qualities of human nature in a state of complete development.

In the following pages we shall treat of Holy Communion as a curative agency for the spiritual ills of adult life, taking care, however, not to repeat too much of what has already been said. In carrying out this plan we shall consider the effects of Holy Communion: (1) in bringing about unity and charity among men; (2) in remitting grave sin.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE HOLY EUCHARIST AS A SOURCE OF UNITY AND CHARITY AMONG MEN.

It may be that the reader will entertain doubts as to the propriety of extending the effect of the Holy Eucharist to temporal matters. Possibly it may appear to him a difficult task indeed to demonstrate the influence of God's grace upon the life of man as a member of the family or of society at large or, especially upon political life. "Experience," he may say, "teaches us something quite different; therefore let us not confuse holy things with temporal."

However, Revelation and Faith are more reliable sources of knowledge in things spiritual than the unaided human intellect. Our Faith teaches that for the very reason that the Eucharist influences the soul, which, in turn, directs the entire life of man, It must of necessity influence also the temporal affairs not only of the individual but of the whole human race as well. We find dogmatic proof of this in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the Greek Mass, where

the following prayer is read by the celebrant just after the "Pater Noster": "Grant, O Lord, that this Holy Sacrament may result in some good to each one of us according to his needs; sail Thou with those upon the high seas; be Thou a companion to those on long journeys; and make well the sick, O Healer of bodies and souls."

As we see, the quoted supplication enumerates temporal needs only. None but individual needs are mentioned in this particular place; but other passages of the Canon of the Greek Mass give testimony to the doctrine that the general, collective needs of humanity are likewise proper subject matter for acceptable prayer. For example, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin is invoked for the strengthening of the political power of nations as seen from the words: "By thy prayers kingdoms are made more stable." Since, then, the prayers of our most powerful intercessor are capable of exerting so mighty an influence upon the destinies of nations, the graces of our Lord Jesus Christ should be even more efficacious. Accordingly, St. Basil the Great draws no line of demarcation between spiritual and temporal good; and a liturgical prayer of his composition, quite similar to

that of St. Chrysostom quoted above, reads: "Bless us, O Lord, sanctify us, fortify us, forgive us all our evil deeds, deliver us from all evil and aid us in our worthy undertakings."

But to return to our thesis: Charity and unity among men are dependent in the first place upon the spiritual equilibrium and inner harmony of the individual—a condition not always readily obtainable. Man consists of body and soul; therefore his desires are two-fold: sensual desires of the body, and desires of the will—the latter normally remaining under the domination of reason. This naturally leads to an internal struggle: and how difficult and arduous this struggle can be we know from our own experience.

St. Paul very frankly acknowledges the strife going on within his own being in his Epistle to the Romans (VII, 15-24), which reads: "That which I work, I understand not; for I do not that good which I will; but the evil, which I hate, that I do." . . . From this introspective analysis the Apostle draws the following psychological deduction: "For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man; but I see another law in my members, fighting

against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members" (Romans: VII, 22-23).

The Most Holy Eucharist assures the happy outcome of the conflicts continually taking place within our two-fold nature; for through its aid the mind overcomes the tendencies of the body. "The grace of God, by Jesus Christ, Our Lord, gave to me the victory"; thus does St. Paul end his confession to the Romans. Through Holy Communion is effected that moral and physical union of the entire man with Jesus regarding which St. Paul so enthusiastically expresses himself in his Epistle to the Galatians (II, 20): "And I live now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And I live now in the flesh: I live in the Faith of the Son of God, who loved and delivered Himself for me."

This sacramental union is explained by the Fathers as follows: "When you worthily receive the Body of Christ, you become that which you receive." And Pope Leo the Great informs us that: "Nothing else is accomplished by receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord than our transformation into What we receive." [1] Inner

[1] Sermo 227 (P.L. 38. 1099).—Compare: Eymard: Die hl. Eucharistie 2 Bd. 103: 177.

harmony and spiritual equilibrium are characteristic of a mature man and without these qualities one is like an inert rubber ball, forever tossed about by the vicissitudes of fate or by the machinations of others. Persons of unstable character cannot exert any influence upon their fellow men. And since inner harmony is obtained most surely by means of frequent Holy Communion, our thesis that Holy Communion is the basis of unity and charity among men is justified.

Furthermore, the Blessed Eucharist enables adults to make use of their inborn abilities to the largest extent to fulfill properly the duties of their respective callings; and to leave behind them not a mere evanescent memory which will perish with the first generation, but real deeds which will have a lasting effect upon the lives and destiny of their posterity. Our Divine Lord has said: "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing" (John: XV, 5). Hence, not only is the supernatural life of man fruitless without frequent Holy Communion, but as we see from the scriptural quotation above, even in matters temporal, the success of human en-

deavors is of doubtful value without the aid of this powerful Sacrament.

Unless a man masters his lower nature and unless his will becomes a servant of his intellect rather than a slave to his body, his efforts must forever remain devoid of meritorious results and his final plight will be the more awful the more generous were his natural endowments.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE HOLY EUCHARIST IS THE PANACEA FOR ALL HUMAN DIFFICULTIES.

Since, then, struggle within the individual is altogether possible and even inevitable—we need not wonder that there exist competition, strife, and hatred among individuals, families, nations and races. However, looking upon the matter theoretically and from the viewpoint of our religion, we cannot escape the conclusion that since through the instrumentality of the Eucharist the individual soul may be cured, it should not be impossible to cure the collective human soul by means of the same sublime agency.

The real somatic union of the devout Christian with Jesus in Holy Communion becomes the cause of the enduring moral union of the recipient with Our Lord. The ideally worthy recipient subordinates all his desires to the will of Christ, and he subordinates them in proportion to the intensity of divine love wherewith he is animated. Is then hatred at all possible among loyal and earnest servants of Christ?

Logically it is impossible! Neither is it possible theologically speaking, for Christ Our Lord demanded mutual charity of His disciples and decreed that this mutual charity should be the test of their love of Himself: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John: XIII, 35).

This passage we may compare with other scriptural texts in which Our Divine Lord reiterates this the second great commandment of the law: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt.: XIX, 19):[1] "If any man say: I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?" (I. John: IV, 20). In still another passage we read of Christ's prayer that charity and unity be ever the mark of His disciples: "I pray for them . . . that they all may be one, as Thou Father in Me, and I in Thee: that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John: XVII, 9, 21). And surely the Son of God could not have prayed in vain.

Verily in the first Christian community at Jerusalem mutual love reigned supreme. It quickly attracted the attention of the surround-

[1] Leviticus: XIX, 18; Exodus: XX, 13.

ing Jews and pagans who greatly marvelled at such disinterested charity, and its edifying spectacle converted many to the Christian Faith. The pages of the New Testament describe for us the practical working out of this mutual charity among the primitive faithful: "And all they that believed were together and had all things in common. Their possessions and goods they sold and divided them to all according as everyone had need. And continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord increased daily together such as should be saved" (Acts: 11, 44-47).

St. John Chrysostom testifies that in his time, that is to say, four centuries subsequent to the events chronicled by St. Luke, all believers held with one accord to the conviction that the Holy Eucharist is the proper symbol of Christian unity and the chief means for its attainment. This illustrious Doctor writes: "As bread consisting of many grains is a single unit and the individual grains are no longer discernible although they are in it, because, on account of the most intimate union into which they have

entered, they have become individually invisible—so are we all one among ourselves and one in Christ. You are not eating of one body and some one else of another body but we all eat of the same Body."[1]

[1] Homilia 24. in. I. epistolam S. Pauli ad Corinthios (P.G. 61. 200).

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST IS THE CATHOLICON FOR ALL SOCIAL AND INTERNATIONAL DIFFERENCES.

Unfortunately real unity has not yet come to prevail among men. Even among Christians there is no complete unity and even among Christian nations mutual accord is lacking. Arrogance and egotism of the rankest sort seem everywhere to be in the ascendancy and as a consequence blood is often shed. Somewhere in the dark shadows of the remote past there was sown the noxious seed of discord, and the wheels of history began to move down the inclined plane of hatred. To turn them back today is a herculean task, especially as the modern mind is straining itself to the utmost to justify and exalt war as the most effective instrument for the spread of culture. However, these reflections need not plunge us into utter despair, for we are consoled by recalling that when the Apostles began to preach the word of God among the heathens, they found themselves obliged to con-

quer prejudices certainly no less formidable than those today so widely prevalent concerning the necessity of war and the exaggerated pride of nations.

In those days, for example, the civilized world was fully convinced that the iniquitous system of slavery was the main support of national economy and that vengeance for injury received is based upon the truest concept of honour. To these views all the ancients subscribed; no one thought differently. Even those who suffered most keenly through these perverse notions were scarcely disposed to question them. For example, a slave on being emancipated would not hesitate to continue that same social institution under which he had experienced such grave wrongs. And even the very victims of bloody vengeance thought of no other possible mode of meting out justice. But the teachings of Christ and His grace have marvellously changed all this. Is it not then conceivable that after the cult of the Most Sacred Body and Blood of Christ shall have spread throughout the world, and shall have become enshrined in the hearts of all—the collective soul of mankind will also be changed? There is no reason for doubting this.

When a whole nation exerts itself to the uttermost in seeking the solution of some important problem, there usually comes to the fore a transcendent genius, who, towering above the masses, cuts a window in the dark wall of perplexity and opens up new horizons before the eyes of his compatriots. If then humanity of its own natural powers is capable in times of acute stress of producing such a flowering of mind and heart—surely with the aid of the graces flowing from the Blessed Eucharist it should be enabled to achieve far more, not only in the domain of things temporal but in that of things spiritual as well. The supposition is undoubtedly reasonable; but will it ever be actually fulfilled? We should not venture a reply were it not for the efficacious prayer of Christ Our Lord and for His prophecy that eventually there shall be but one fold and one shepherd: "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John: XVII, 21).

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE EUCHARIST AS A MEANS FOR THE REMISSION OF MORTAL SIN.

Experience impresses upon pastors of souls the extreme difficulty of bringing persons of mature age to the practice of frequent Holy Communion: youth furnishes a far larger proportion of faithful worshippers of the Blessed Sacrament. All too frequently do adults attempt to justify their indifference toward the Eucharistic cult on a ground which at first sight might be considered an indication of conscientiousness and piety while, as a matter of fact, it is naught but a pharisaical pretext.

"My life," they say, "is filled with hard work and with troubles of all kinds. I cannot trust my memory; hence I cannot receive Holy Communion without Confession. I know that should I forget to mention any grievous sin while making my confession it would be indirectly remitted; but were I to receive Holy Communion without going to Confession my conscience would always trouble me." To overcome such

scruples among persons of mature age who on account of their manifold and arduous duties might forget something which they should have confessed and to induce them to the practice of frequent Holy Communion—one further effect of the Blessed Sacrament should be emphasized at this point, namely, that through Holy Communion one may sometimes obtain remission even of mortal sin.

In the Mass there takes place the change of the wine into the Blood of Christ through the words which, according to St. Matthew, Jesus spoke at the Last Supper: "Drink ye all of this, For This Is My Blood Of The New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt.: XXVI, 26-28).[1] The Eastern Church places an especial stress upon the phrase: "Unto the remission of sins" in that it commands the celebrant to pronounce the self-same words immediately after the consecration of the bread, although the evangelists do not mention that these words were uttered by Christ at the consecration of the bread at the Last Supper.

From this usage we may infer: (a) that eccle-

[1] Mark: XIV, 22-24; Luke: XXII, 19-20; John: VI, 50-58; Corin.: XI, 24-25.

siastical tradition held that perhaps Our Lord actually pronounced these words over the bread as well as over the wine although the evangelists neglect to mention the fact, or (b) that the expression "Unto the remission of sins" was intended by Our Lord as the finale for both species consecrated, or (c) that the Eastern Church added this finale after the consecration of the bread on her own initiative. In any event this finale as employed in both formulas of consecration must have a solid dogmatic basis since it is found in the Liturgies of Saints Basil the Great and John Chrysostom.

As was remarked above, the Oriental Church emphasizes the importance of these words of Christ in enjoining the priest to repeat them not only during the consecration of both Sacred Species but also in the act of communicating the faithful.

The Old Slavonic version of the Greek Liturgy employs a clear, unequivocal terminology in prayers before and after the words of Institution, in which prayers a mortal offence is called simply "sin" while a venial offence is styled "trespass" or "transgression." The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom therefore has it that Holy Communion is administered ". . . for

the remission of sins and for the forgiveness of transgressions." After the Blessed Eucharist is given to the communicant the priest adds: "This Holy Sacrament having touched thy lips shall blot out thy transgressions and cleanse thee from sins."

The Mozarabic Mass is likewise quite definite in this regard: "Whosoever receives these Sacred Species with true piety . . .even though he be unworthy . . . may he receive the remission of his (grievous) sins." [1]

Obviously it would be highly incorrect to call one guilty of only venial sin an unworthy communicant.

It is of course only in exceptional cases that Holy Communion may be the means for the remission of mortal sin. The question now arises under what circumstances is this effect obtained. One of the greatest philosophers of all time, St. Thomas Aquinas, provides the answer. The Angelic Doctor considers the Holy Eucharist under two different aspects: first, as embodying Christ and illustrating His Sacred Passion, and, second in Its relation to him who receives It. Theoretically, the Eucharist has the power to

[1] "Sentiat se procuravisse . . . indignus suorum criminum veniam."

remit all sins, including mortal sins; but in practice the recipient must be already possessed of sanctifying grace by reason of the fact that the Blessed Eucharist is food for the soul; and food may be taken only by the living.

Furthermore, the aim of Holy Communion is the uniting of man with God; but nothing sinful may be united with God; therefore, ordinarily at least, no one in the state of mortal sin may receive Holy Communion. However, in the opinion of St. Thomas there are two instances in which the Eucharist may remit mortal sin,—namely: first, when a person receives Holy Communion not actually but through desire in receiving the Sacrament of Baptism; and second, when a person actually receives Holy Communion, unconscious of a mortal sin which has not as yet been remitted.[1]

That this process of reasoning is not devoid of foundation, may be inferred from the fact that even Extreme Unction, though likewise a Sacrament of the living, may also remit mortal sin of which the recipient is oblivious.

This being so, the Blessed Eucharist should surely have the same salutary effect since, as we have already seen, It is the very heart of the

[1] Pars 3. quaestio 79. articulus 3.

Sacramental system and the source of its sanctifying power.

It is to be understood of course that should a person, after receiving Holy Communion in good faith, become conscious of unremitted mortal sin, he is obliged, when next he presents himself at the tribunal of penance, to confess such sin; precisely as a person who may have received the remission of grievous sin before confession by virtue of perfect contrition, is nevertheless strictly held to submit his sin subsequently to the power of the keys.

This secondary effect of the Sacrament of the Eucharist should not only prove an immeasurable consolation to those inclined to be inordinately scrupulous, but it should, moreover, serve to induce to the practice of frequent Holy Communion such persons of mature age as, owing to the manifold cares of adult life and to the arduous duties incumbent upon them, cannot always depend upon memory in making their confession.

# (D) THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST AS A CURE FOR THE SPIRITUAL INFIRMITIES OF THE AGED.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE AGED.

While it is true that the majority of the population dies before reaching old age, a considerable proportion of it does live to attain the age of sixty years and in exceptional cases individuals live to be eighty years old and more. A person reaching advanced age experiences peculiar difficulties in connection with his religious life, and requires special supernatural graces for overcoming them. Old age manifests itself through a gradual loss of faculties, both physical and mental. The responsiveness of the senses to outward influences diminishes; one sense after another deteriorating to such an extent that the subject must of necessity relinquish his occupation and seek retirement from active pursuits. This decadence of physical powers is followed by a similar decadence of mental powers. At

first the memory begins to fail, then the imagination and finally the intellect and in extreme senility even the will no longer functions. In some cases of extreme old age the subject becomes childlike, moral responsibility ceasing to exist, and the faculties of the soul dying out like a lamp in which the oil has become exhausted. Occasionally such a person enjoys consciousness and the use of volition only in rare moments, the so-called lucid intervals.

What happens to the supernatural life of a subject in this last condition cannot be definitely stated. There is reason to fear that the devil does not neglect this opportunity; but that with increased efforts he strives to accomplish the subject's downfall. There are many things that abet him in this nefarious work: discouragement because of the loss of physical and mental vigour and because of the sufferings attendant upon this loss; dissatisfaction over the necessity of yielding place to younger men in his chosen sphere of endeavor; the gradually increasing and sometimes ill-concealed contempt of the rising generation; the diminution of his former authority; and, in many instances, poverty. All these furnish ample material for spiritual depression. In addi-

tion, there are difficulties of a purely moral nature: the feeling of guilt because of sins formerly committed; the dread of death and of God's judgment; both these, together with a coexistent weakness of will, lead sometimes to complete inertness or to despair.

The remedy for all these moral shortcomings and spiritual perils is, again, the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, and this for the following reasons: (1) the Eucharist insures continuance in the state of sanctifying grace, and, accordingly, the ultimate salvation of the soul; (2) the Eucharist is a pledge of the glorious resurrection of the body; (3) the Eucharist brings about the remission, of a part at least, and in particular cases of all, of the temporal punishment due to sin.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE MOST BLESSED EUCHARIST AS A GUARANTEE OF CONTINUANCE IN GRACE AND OF ULTIMATE SALVATION.

A dismal tragedy indeed occurs when a man after long years spent in God's favour loses sanctifying grace and dies in mortal sin. This sad fate must overtake some, for Christ Our Lord felt it necessary on several occasions to warn His followers of it. "He that standeth," says Christ, "let him guard against the fall." The description of the devil who, "as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (I. Peter: V, 8), should be taken as a serious warning by all the faithful—for the prince of darkness does not work in vain. Our Saviour implies that unfortunately many who have lived a holy life die in the state of sin: "Many are called but few are chosen." (Matt.: XX, 16).[1] Those who so fall, usually fall lower than the average sinner; and some who were "the first" at some time in their lives—will end their earthly pilgrimage as "the

[1] Luke: XIV, 24.

last"—(Matt.: XIX, 30), for even His disciples capable of performing miracles cannot be certain of their own salvation.

Our Lord's words of admonition are supported by facts, for Judas, one of the chosen twelve, closed his life as a son of perdition, his place being taken by another (Acts: I, 25). Many confessors have renounced the martyr's crown to become apostates: and even deacons, priests and bishops have finished their careers as open enemies of the Church of God.

While neglect of the supernatural at any time of life is rightly deemed a tragedy, this tragedy is certainly the more terrible when it happens in old age. It is only through the grace of God that one may continue in holiness for any length of time; but it is through a still more notable divine grace that one achieves perseverance unto death; and the Holy Eucharist assures Its devout worshippers of this final perseverance.

This guarantee was announced by Our Saviour at the time He gave the promise of instituting the Blessed Sacrament: "I am the Bread of Life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the Bread which cometh down from Heaven; that if any man eat of It, he may not die. I am the Living Bread which

came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever. . . . He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day." And the same doctrine presented negatively: "Amen, Amen, I say to you: except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood you shall not have life in you. . . . He that eateth this Bread, shall live forever." (John: VI, 48-59).

The habitual state of holiness is the most important result of the frequent reception of the Blessed Eucharist; and the early Fathers insisted upon frequent reception, mainly because they thoroughly appreciated its indispensability to those who would steadfastly persevere in the state of sanctifying grace unto death.

The patristic authors set forth their views regarding this matter in various examples and similes, depending upon contemporary circumstances and modes of speech. Thus St. Irenaeus, speaking of the black despair into which the pagan philosophers of his time had fallen because of their inability to discover something definite about the life hereafter, called the Eucharist—the means for obtaining life everlasting with

Jesus.[1] St. Augustine, in explaining the fourth petition of the Lord's prayer, speaks in like manner. He assures us that through eating the Heavenly Bread we shall never again be separated from Jesus Christ by mortal sin; but shall continue in the state of God's grace until the end of our lives.[2] According to St. Justinian, supernatural vigour and immortality are inculcated into the soul by means of Holy Communion.[3] And Durant says: "We believe that this Bread not only removes the danger of eternal death but also supplies the grace of eternal glory to those who receive it worthily." [4]

Ava Rupert was so strongly convinced of the utter impossibility of continuing in grace and of gaining life eternal without the aid of Holy Communion that he devoted much time and study to the question of how salvation could be attained by those unable to receive Holy Communion. His conclusion is, that among the members of the Catholic Church only small children and those for whom Holy Communion is physically impossible are exempt from the duty of receiving this August Sacrament.[5] Germanus, in

[1] Ad Ephesios, caput 20, pars 2.
[2] De dono perseverantiae, caput 4. (P.L., v. 45-998).
[3] Apologia, Pars I., caput 66 (P. Gr., v. 6-429).
[4] Liber de Corpore et Sanguine Domini (P. Lat., v. 149-1390).
[5] Commentarius in cant. canticorum (P.L., v. 168-905).

discoursing upon the effects of Holy Communion especially exhorts those who are in imminent danger of death. He reminds them that in times of religious persecution the prospective martyrs were accustomed to fortify themselves against torture and death with the Body and Blood of Christ; and he earnestly recommends that those near death should take care to receive Holy Viaticum so as not to start on their long and perilous journey without this Celestial Food and without Defence.[1]

For further substantiation of these teachings it may be well to call to mind the formula employed by the Eastern Church in the distribution of the Eucharist, which states explicitly that this Sacrament is being given for the purpose of securing to the recipient life everlasting. The Oecumenical Council of Trent also teaches that Holy Communion protects us from mortal sin.[2] Obviously this protection, to be efficacious, must be continued until old age and until death.

In what manner then does the Blessed Sacrament safeguard us from mortal sin and guarantee us final perseverance and salvation? Reason

[1] Liturgia Gallicana, lib. I., cap. 9. (P.L., v. 72-160).

[2] Sess. 13, cap. 2: "Sumi autem voluit (Salvator) Sacramentum hoc . . . tamquam antidotum, quo . . . a peccatis mortalibus preservemur."

and experience show us that the Blessed Sacrament exerts a powerful indirect effect upon the close of a Christian's life. Through frequent Holy Communion he obtains peace of conscience and he is confirmed in his hope of a happy eternity. As a consequence, he experiences more and more enjoyment in the supernatural life. All that is temporal loses value in his eyes, for he recognizes and feels in his heart its vanity and evanescence. Accordingly, carnal desires and evil inclinations loose their grip upon him.

As through the sin of our first parents the mental faculties of man became dulled, this affording the devil a more ready entrance into his heart—so now through his sacramental union with Jesus the mind of the Christian becomes keener and is enabled the more readily to detect the artifices of the evil one and to combat them the more successfully.

In addition to this, according to the Fathers of the Church, the Blessed Sacrament exerts a corresponding direct influence by suppressing bad inclinations. St. John Chrysostom says: "When we partake of this drink it kills the serpents and vermin (that is weakness of character) which dwell within us." [1] St. Cyril of

[1] Homilia 4. in Evang. Matthaei (P.G., v. 57, P. 50).

Alexandria compares the fever which troubled St. Peter's mother-in-law (Luke: IV, 38-39) with the fever of desire that fills our bodies and thus endangers our souls, and he preaches the Blessed Eucharist as a remedy for it: "Let us therefore receive Jesus within us. As soon as He enters within us and we retain Him within our hearts He will extinguish the fever of our concupiscence and will fill us with zeal and with energy of soul so that we shall ever faithfully serve Him and do His bidding." [1]

[1] Comm. in Lucam, 4., 38. (P.G., 72-552).

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE MOST BLESSED EUCHARIST AS A PLEDGE OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

One of the causes of the depression of spirit experienced in old age is the consciousness that the time is fast approaching when the soul must leave its present abode and when the body must be given back to the earth there to disintegrate. This grim reality terrorizes not only the sinner who makes his body his God and who is incapable of rising above the material world and its transient pleasures, but it terrorizes even the righteous man who relegates his body to its proper level of merely secondary importance.

The beauty of the world about us whose impressions we receive through the external senses furnish so much material for lofty religious thought that even the pious Christian abhors the notion of being separated from the body through which he communicated with the world and through the world with God. It is painful indeed for the soul to be separated from the body, its life-long companion and servant.

These natural melancholy feelings of old age assume different forms in different persons, in accordance with their temperament, and in accordance with the spiritual life which they have cultivated. The truly religious find an easy solution of their problem in their belief concerning the resurrection of the body, while the irreligious become horribly depressed and surrender to despair.

Our Divine Lord speaks very clearly concerning the relation of Holy Communion to the resurrection of the body: "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath life everlasting; and I will raise him up on the last day." (John: VI, 55). We know that the early Fathers took these words literally, for in arguing against the heretics they base their conclusions upon the causative relation between Holy Communion and the future resurrection. Thus St. Ignatius of Antioch grieves because the Docetae did not communicate, since they so deprived themselves of the possibility of glorious resurrection: "It would be well for them to receive Communion so that they may rise." [1] St. Irenaeus subscribes to the same opinion in his treatise against the Gnostics: "How can they say

[1] Ad Smyrnenses, 7, 1.

that the body is subject to decay and has no part in life when it is nourished by the Body and Blood of Our Lord! . . . As the bread, though a product of the earth, on the pronouncing over it of the words of Consecration—ceases to be ordinary bread and becomes the Holy Eucharist composed of elements earthly and heavenly, so also our bodies, having partaken of the Holy Eucharist—cease to be subject to decay, since they then carry within them the germ of resurrection unto life eternal." [1]

Of course the words "cease to be subject to decay," should not be interpreted literally, for we know that the bodies of Christians do decompose after death. However the time of their decay is infinitesimally brief as compared with the endless life which will be theirs after the resurrection. That St. Irenaeus himself did not take these words in a strictly literal sense, may be seen from a simile which he employs elsewhere in the same work. He makes mention of the grain of wheat which decomposes in the earth in order to be born into a new life, not only natural but also supernatural, because it is destined through the Consecration of the Mass to be changed into the Body of Christ. In like manner, says the author,

[1] Adversus haereticos, pars 4, caput 18. (P.G. 7-1027).

our bodies shall die and shall decompose in the grave; but he who, while still living, received through the Blessed Eucharist the germ of resurrection—shall in due time be raised in glory from the interior of the earth.[1]

St. John Chrysostom[2] and St. Gregory of Nyssa[3] too, ascribe to the Blessed Sacrament this influence upon the resurrection of the body; and the same is true of such later theologians as Ava Rupert, Baldwin of Canterbury,[4] Honorius of Autun (Augustodunensis),[5] Paschasius Radbertus, who drew upon the works of St. Hilary,[6] and many others.

But will not the bodies of sinners also rise from the grave? They will, most certainly, for sin cannot be ultimately victorious over God's providence. When once God unites body and soul for life everlasting—this union of matter and spirit must endure forever. The bodies of sinners, after a comparatively brief period of time, will certainly rise from the grave, but this resurrection

[1] Adversus haereticos, pars 5, caput 2 (P.G. 7-1027).
[2] Homilia 24. in Epistolam S. Pauli ad Corinthios (P.GR., vol. 61-201).
[3] Catechesis Major, cap. 37. (Patr. Gr., vol. 45-93).
[4] De Sacramento Eucharistiae (Patr. Lat., v. 204-414).
[5] Eucharistion: Operum pars 4, cap. 4 (P.L., v. 172-1250).
[6] De Trinitate, cap. 8.

will be something vastly different from that to which the devout Christian looks forward.

Our Lord draws the distinction between "the resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of judgment." (John: V, 29). The latter type is even more horrible than death itself and may be called resurrection only by analogy. Similarly St. John Chrysostom in his Canon of the Mass differentiates between the "judgment" and "doom" of those who communicate unworthily, and the "healing of soul and body and life everlasting," which is to be the reward of worthy recipients. By "life" the Holy Writ means only eternal beatitude; and by the term "resurrection," we are to understand only the resurrection to celestial glory and to endless companionship with Jesus Christ.

Through the fall of our first parents our bodies were deprived of that immortality which they had been designed to enjoy, and our souls forfeited sanctifying grace. That both these lost privileges are regained only through the Holy Eucharist—is a matter of Faith; but the statement is to be taken in a broad sense and with due regard to the degree of religious consciousness prevailing at a given time and in a given locality. By this is meant that should it, for any reason

whatsoever, be morally impossible for the individual to receive the Blessed Eucharist—the very desire of receiving It will be accepted as sufficient, even if this intention be so undefined as to its content that it could have been formulated by the godly men who flourished under the Old Dispensation, or so unripe as to its form as it is in the case of infants, for whom the act of desire is supplied by the Church. In any event, the Christian who piously receives Holy Communion, obtains a second title to participation in the glorious resurrection of the just. The first title, common to all good Christians, is the union of the body with the immortal and sanctified soul; the second is the union of man to his Eucharist Lord.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE MOST BLESSED EUCHARIST LESSENS TEMPORAL PUNISHMENT.

None fear the approach of death and judgment as do the aged. Youth is free from frightful thoughts of death by reason of its characteristic unconcern and vivacity, while adult life is comparatively free from such terror because it is occupied with hard work and cheered by a consciousness of strength. Even when a rather young person becomes seriously ill his sufferings and discomfort make him wish for death merely as a means of liberation from his bodily sufferings, but without much concern for the everlasting future.

Old age is ever the threshold of death even though that death be painless. The progressive weakening of the organism, although no specific disease may afflict it, constantly reminds one of his coming dissolution. The thought of death affrights even the aged folks who have been very devout in their lives, because of their realization of the temporal punishment due them for

their sins. Here again the Blessed Eucharist is most helpful, for, though it is not a revealed truth that Holy Communion diminishes the debt of temporal punishment, neither has the Church infallibly proclaimed such to be the case—the conclusion that it does diminish this debt follows logically from the dogmas already examined.

First of all this deduction follows directly from the truth that Holy Communion remits sins: venial sins always, provided only that the recipient approach the Table of the Lord with a firm resolution of shunning these sins in the future; and mortal sins occasionally in the exceptional circumstances already described. Since, then, simultaneously with every remission of sin a part of the temporal punishment due for them is remitted—we are not rash in concluding that through Holy Communion, a part at least of the recipient's debt of the temporal punishment is cancelled.

Furthermore, our conclusion proceeds indirectly from a study of the effects of the Eucharist, among which by far the most important is the enriching of the soul with actual graces and consequent virtues, especially the virtue of love of God. It is an established fact that an act of

love of God may win for a man the remission of his sins (Luke: VII, 47); and this being so, it stands to reason that an act of love of God may be instrumental in achieving partial remission of temporal punishment.

This effect of Holy Communion should be a solace for the aged in all their spiritual tribulations, and should serve as an inducement for them to receive this adorable Sacrament as frequently as possible.

# PART III.

## THE MOST BLESSED EUCHARIST IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

# CHAPTER I.

## THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST AS THE MAINSTAY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

It is the consensus of opinion not only of historians but also of grave philosophers that the civilized world of today is sliding farther and farther down the ethical plane. Whether or not this opinion is based on facts or is due in the main to a pessimistic outlook, is a debatable question; but one thing is certain, namely, that the World War marked a decisive step in the evolution of our religious and moral feelings.

The World War brought to the surface animal instincts which were formerly deeply hidden. The fundamentals of morality theretofore universally recognized at least in theory, although quite frequently ignored in practice, are now disregarded as a matter of principle. Godlessness, which prior to the War was artfully secreted behind the screen of expediency in affairs social and political, now steps boldly

into the open as a program in itself and as a basis for the solution of all public problems, and aims to dominate human society.[1] The spectacle of the outpoured blood of God's martyred servants and the spectacle of his alienated temples, desecrated by theatrical productions and by profane meetings, give renewed encouragement to the forces of atheism and tend to break the spirit of the faithful.

On the other hand we observe a widespread and enthusiastic reaction in favor of religion, for Catholics with one accord are rallying loyally around the Throne of St. Peter. We are witnessing the championing of religious movements by persons whose names are celebrated the world over, yet who gladly and proudly profess their connection with such movements—a situation almost unknown before the World War. Even the governmental machines of entire nations which in former years recognized no principle outside of that of matter and force, today openly exalt the Cross of Christ as the banner under which they aim to carry on their work.

This sharp conflict of ideas undoubtedly

[1] Radicalism—Communism.

means open warfare in defence of religion with all its consequences. Several times already in the course of her history the Catholic Church has been similarly besieged by the forces of unbelief, but she has come forth from each succeeding combat victorious and always through the aid of the same medium—the cult of the Holy Eucharist. This historical fact constitutes an additional reason for our exerting all our power and influence to the end of developing the Eucharist cult to such a point as the Sovereign Pontiff desires.

It is the object of this last part of our treatise to move, if possible, the conscience of the unbelieving and the indifferent. Realizing that their viewpoint is materialistic, we shall have recourse to a pragmatic argument, that is, we shall endeavor to present data from the history of the Church, proving that the religious and moral life of Christians always bore a direct relation to the intensity with which the cult of the Blessed Sacrament was practiced at a given moment.

The Eucharistic Cult has already passed through two phases, and today we are in the third phase of its development.[1] The first phase

[1] Bartmann, Bernhard: Op. cit. II, 302.

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extending from the time of Our Lord to the end of the third century—the entire catacombic period—was characterized by an unshakable faith in the Blessed Sacrament and by an ardent and sincere love as well which was manifested by a joyful and frequent receiving of the Bread of Life.

The second phase, which endured from the reign of Constantine the Great until the Council of Trent, rather reminds one of the experiences of the prodigal son; for on the one hand rebelliousness of thought led many Christians into the gravest of errors, while on the other the bitter sufferings attendant upon these errors served to recall many to a realization of their duty.

Accordingly, we shall study the nexus between the intensity of the Eucharistic Cult and the level of the religious and moral life of Christians, which we shall proceed to analyze, considering:—(a) the unity subsisting between the members of the Church and her Head, and the unity among the members themselves; (b) missionary expansion, and the means for its accomplishment; (c) the ethical level of life and especially as evidenced in the care of the poor—that indubitable outward criterion of a

healthy, unaffected love of God and of fellow men![1]

[1] Pitynek: Am Herzen Jesu, 212.—Dwight: Himmelsbrot, 89.—Ratzinger, Georg: Geshichte der kirchlichen Armenpflege.—Compare: Matt.: XI, 4-5; 46-48; VI, 1-4; XVIII, 21-22.—Luke: VI, 37-38.—John: XV, 16-17.

# (A) THE PERIOD OF PERSECUTION

"And the four and twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours . . . and they sang a new canticle, saying. . . ." (Apocalypse: V, 8-9).

## CHAPTER II.

### AT THE FOOT OF ZION.

The inspired pages of the Acts of the Apostles describe in glowing terms the saintly life lived by the original Christian community at Jerusalem. They highly laud the docility and eagerness of these early believers in receiving the word of truth from the mouths of the Apostles, their sincere piety as seen in their perseverance in prayer and in the reception of Holy Communion, and above all their fraternal charity.[1] They praise also their simplicity of heart, and their joy in the performance of good works,[2] and they remark with satisfaction the

[1] Acts: II, 42: "And they were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles and in the communication of the breaking of bread and in prayers."

[2] Acts: II, 46: ". . . they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart."

esteem in which they were held by outsiders.[1] While other contemporary Christian communities were also noted for sanctity of life—in no other community did this sanctity reach the heights attained at Jerusalem.

For illustration, the weekly collections taken up in some early churches[2] for the benefit of the poor—could hardly be thought equal in moral value to the system obtaining at Jerusalem, under which "owners of houses and lands cheerfully sold them laying the proceeds at the feet of the Apostles"[3] to be used for the relief of the poor. Neither could other methods of alleviating the distress of poverty compare with the fraternal charity exemplified at Jerusalem, where they "had all things in common"[4]—and no one did "say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but all things were common unto them."[5] This manner of assisting the poor, which was exceptional even among the primitive Christians, provides us with an index to the whole ethical and religious level of the

[1] Acts: II, 47: ". . . and having favour with all the people" Acts: V, 13: "but the people magnified them."
[2] I. Cor.: XVI, 2: "On the first day of the week, let every one of you put apart with himself, laying up what it shall well please him: that when I come, the collections be not then to be made."
[3] Acts: IV, 34.
[4] Acts: II, 44.
[5] Acts: IV, 32.

first Christian community;[1] and such unique solicitude for the unfortunate proves that other virtues as well must have been shining at Jerusalem with rare brilliance.

It can readily be conjectured what were the causes that brought into being so ideal a state of affairs. We know that subsequent to St. Peter's transfer of the Papal See to Rome, the permanent Bishop of Jerusalem was the Apostle St. James the Greater,[2] a man renowned for his singular prayerfulness and asceticism; and it is not surprising that this living personification of the love of God should not have remained without imitation. Still more important is the fact that the Church of Jerusalem had been organized under the vigilant eye of the Mother of God herself,[3] and certainly, the Blessed Virgin Mary, possessing as she does the fulness of grace and the plenitude of understanding of the mysteries of Faith—did not fail to realize the worth of the Bread of Angels for the sustenance of the supernatural life. It is therefore most reasonable to suppose, in conformity with tradition,

[1] Ratzinger, Georg: Op. cit.
[2] Gal. I, 19.
[3] Acts: II, 42; Acts: I, 14: "All these were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus. . . ."

that she requested the Apostles to feed her daily this Celestial Food, and that her example had great force with all coming within the sphere of its influence.[1]

It may also be supposed that the Church of Jerusalem was more liberally endowed with actual grace than her sister churches of the Diaspora,[2] because she was destined to fulfill a mission more difficult than theirs. The Diaspora was to wage a spiritual warfare against the physically and morally corrupt fabric of heathenism and in the very nature of things, the Diaspora enjoyed a greater likelihood of successful combat and victory than the new Church of Jerusalem beset by the ruling Synagogue, which, although vitiated by excessive formalism—had never fallen so low morally as pagandom, and was capable of offering very violent opposition to the new Faith, in defence of what it conceived to be the honour of the old.[3]

[1] Dwight: Op. cit.

[2] The Diaspora—so-called scattering of the Jews after the year 74, all over Asia Minor, Europe and Egypt; figuratively: the emigration, and the extension of the Church among the Jews, Greeks and others outside Jerusalem and Palestine.

[3] Hirniak, Justin: Racionalizm ta Pochatky Chrystyanstwa.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE HOLY EUCHARIST CHANGES THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COLLECTIVE HUMAN SOUL.

However this may be, the principal part in the organization and life of the early centers of Christianity was played by the Holy Eucharist,[1] that is, by the Sacramental Christ Himself, the fountainhead of all grace.[2] We know that all Christians at Jerusalem, regardless of age, were wont to receive Holy Communion every day, and the same can be predicated, but with certain reservations, of other early congregations of the faithful as shall be shown later on. The expression of joy which the inspired author of the Acts of the Apostles beheld upon the countenances of those who participated daily in the Lord's Supper,[3] proves that they were not unconscious of the ineffable grace which they were receiving.

They were, of course, especially well pre-

[1] John: VI, 48: "I am the Bread of Life."
[2] John: XV, 4-5: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me . . . for without me you can do nothing."
[3] Acts: II, 46.

pared for participation in this Adorable Sacrament by the teachings of Our Lord as set down in the Gospels, whose authors, the four Evangelists—were still alive and very active in ecclesiastical affairs.[1] They would seem to have realized that while Holy Communion, indirectly through its concomitant act of love of God, absolves from venial sin and protects from mortal sin [2]—these negative results do but remove the obstacles which might have frustrated the chief effects of this Holy Sacrament. These chief effects are the close union with the living Christ, that is with God Himself,[3] and the resultant mystic fellowship of charity among all the participants.[4]

Through the graces of Holy Communion, feelings of selfish individualism rapidly disappeared among the early believers. The primitive faithful lived not by and for themselves, but Christ lived within them, so that their glowing virtues proceeded spontaneously from an interior supernatural life which was common to all.

[1] John: VI, 32-35; 48-59.
[2] Matt.: XXVI, 28.—Luke: XXII, 19-20: "For this is My Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins."
[3] John: XVII, 21.
[4] I. Cor.: X, 16-17, "For we, being many, are one bread, one body; all that partake of one bread."

As a child receives with complete confidence and without the least criticism the teachings of its mother, thereby laying the substructure for the normal development of mind and body—so the first Christians accepted unhesitatingly the revealed truth concerning the Bread of Angels, and being refreshed with It daily—drew from It an understanding of the dogmas of religion, missionary energy and heroic sanctity.

Through Holy Communion they were perfectly united with God and among themselves. By way of illustration, the person of St. Peter was more precious to them than any individual possession; and when his fate hung in the balance—they offered fervent suffrages for his welfare,[1] and strove at the risk of their lives to effect his deliverance from prison. The unassailed authority of the first Sovereign Pontiff in matters of faith and order alike, was a fast bond of union among them, and their unparalleled solicitude for the needy—united them yet closer into one body, and gave testimony before the world of a type of love at that time almost unknown outside the infant Church.

It was this same love toward their fellow men

[1] Acts: XII, 5: ". . . But prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God for him."

which compelled them to extend their missionary labors.[1] The fraternal charity fostered at the Holy Table operated powerfully to quell those differences which of necessity arise from time to time in any social order. The civil strife of class against class was totally unknown among them; and, instead of shouting revolutionary slogans of mutual hatred and of vengeance against the rich, all the worshippers of the Lamb sang together a new canticle [2] of love of God and of neighbor, a new song of spiritual evolution, of Christian culture and of civic virtues.

[1] Acts: VIII, 2.
[2] Apocalypse: V, 9.

# CHAPTER IV.

## THE DIASPORA.

But the Church of Jerusalem did not long endure. Less than forty years after its establishment the faithful, seeing the hostile legions of Rome surrounding the city as with an iron ring, recalled the prophecy of Our Lord concerning the destruction of Jerusalem [1] and fled into the mountains, afterwards scattering over all Palestine.[2]

Outside of Palestine, the circumstances under which the Apostles and their disciples had to carry on their missionary activities, were not so favorable to the spread of the Eucharistic cult.

The faithful were sparsely scattered over a wide territory, and the Apostles were obliged to earn their living by various kinds of labour.[3]

[1] Luke: XIX, 43-44: "For the days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round and straiten thee on every side. And beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee. And they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone. . . ."

[2] Matt.: XXIV, 16-18. "Then they that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains: and he that is on the housetop, let him not come down to take anything out of his house; and he that is in the field, let him not go back to take his coat."

[3] Acts: XVIII, 3.

Moreover, the sharp eye of the pagan civil authorities, who were of course instigated by Jewish zealots, prevented the Christians from holding daily assemblies,[1] and as a consequence, the word of God was preached only occasionally and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered not more often than once or twice a week.[2] Nevertheless, frequent and even daily Holy Communion was practiced very widely by virtue of an extraordinary concession granted by the Bishops, who, taking into consideration the violence of the persecution and the proximate danger of death in which every Christian was placed, at times permitted the Blessed Sacrament to be reserved in private houses in order that the privilege of communicating daily might not be withheld. However, frequent Holy Communion was not as general throughout the Diaspora as at Jerusalem. History proves that even as early as the end of the first century the pastors of these regions found it necessary to admonish the negligent.[3] At all events the custom of daily Holy Communion was maintained at Rome[4]

[1] Gal.: II, 4-5; II. Cor.: XI, 4.
[2] I. Cor.: XVI, 2.
[3] Solski: Nauka o Komunii Swietej.
[4] Pope Anacletus (+96) rebuked the Romans for coming to Mass for prayers only, and not receiving the Holy Communion.

and in Upper Italy,[1] Africa,[2] Spain,[3] and Gaul.[4]

As regards the Greek territory, we have no accurate knowledge as to how widely the apostolic usage of daily Holy Communion was there in force. We know only that at Alexandria, about the end of the second century, just as at Rome a century earlier, it was necessary for the ecclesiastical authorities to remind the faithful of the high laudability of receiving Holy Communion daily. Thus Origen taught that, every day being a holy day to Christians, they should receive the Blessed Eucharist daily. St. Clement of Alexandria expressed himself in similar fashion. Still, negligence in this matter was probably very rare in the East as well; otherwise the renowned steadfastness in the Faith of the Greek Confessors and Martyrs, who at that time were shedding rivers of blood for the Cross of Christ—would present an insoluble psychological puzzle.

[1] St. Ambrose.
[2] St. Cyprian.
[3] St. Jerome.
[4] St. Cassian.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST AS THE SYMBOL OF UNION IN THE FAITH.

Before recounting the results of frequent, if not daily, Holy Communion through the Diaspora—we must point out that even in that early age the faithful appreciated the necessary connection existing between this Sacrament and the true Christian life. They were careful to draw a distinction between the Eucharist and the other rites of religion, as between cause and effect. St. Cyprian wrote that the Christians of that day "drank daily a cup of the Blood of Christ in order to be able to shed their own blood for Christ." Furthermore, Holy Communion was recognized as a symbol of union in the Faith, and in pursuance of the notion the Sacred Species were sometimes conveyed from one cathedral to another.[1]

Nor was this ancient custom devoid of deep significance; for the union of the faithful among

[1] Eusebius.—Concilium Laodicensis (361).—Morawski: Świetych Obcowanie. Komunia Miedzy Duszami.

themselves and with the Sovereign Pontiff at Rome—was a subject which constantly occupied the attention of the foremost hierarchs, especially with the appearance of various heresies and schisms. The importance in which the early faithful held the union of the Churches with one another, and the absolute subjection of the Universal Church to the authority of the Bishop of Rome—can be adequately appreciated only when we consider the difficulties of travel and of communication, and the determined and long continued effort of the Roman Emperors to abolish the Holy Apostolic See.

As regards the other characteristic features of Christian life—namely sanctity and constancy in faith—these flourished mightily in that age, when daily or frequent Holy Communion was so widely practiced; they were by no means unknown to the pagans, and they were credited by the contemporary ecclesiastical historians with the phenomenal spread of the Catholic Religion. Without questioning this assertion of the historians, we have the right to affirm on the basis of the dogmatic elucidation in the preceding chapter, that this sanctity of life and constancy in the Faith are properly considered as resulting from the cult of the Eucharist. These virtues

were, to be sure, the direct causes of the spread of the Faith, but the source of them was undoubtedly the graces flowing from the Blessed Eucharist. Unfortunately we are possessed of no specific information concerning the manner of providing for the poor at that time. However, the fact that in the fourth century, that is at the time of the lowering of the standard of Christian life, the Church substituted for private almsgiving official charitable action on a grand scale[1] proves that in the preceding centuries private almsgiving must have been prevalent.

But we may ask—did Catholicism, whose principle of action is the Holy Eucharist, bring about a social improvement beyond the limits of Palestine? Among the faithful it most certainly did! The Religion of Christ gave rise to radical social changes of a most beneficial sort in introducing monogamy and lifting woman to the dignity of mistress of the home, and in proscribing slavery or, at least, in making masters more considerate towards their slaves and the slaves more patient and tractable.[2]

[1] Eusebius: VI, 43.—Pope Cornelius (253) had under his care 1500 widows and orphans.

[2] Ephesians: VI, 5-9. "Servants, be obedient to them . . . in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ . . . doing the will of God from the heart. . . . And you, masters, do the same things to them, forbearing threatenings: knowing that the Lord both of them and you is in heaven. And there is no respect of persons with Him."

In reading the annals of those times, it must be remembered that these upheavals—had it not been for the salutary influence of Christianity—might have had vastly different consequences. However, over this bright picture of Eucharistic worship, there was cast a shadow even in a very early period of the Church's history. Under the influence of misguided apologetic inquiry and of pagan rationalism, there died out in the hearts of some of the faithful the primitive apostolic simplicity in receiving Holy Communion, and in its place there arose a tendency to explain the mysteries of Faith with the aid of human reasoning. Some, therefore, came to interpret the teaching of Our Lord concerning the necessity of receiving the Bread of Life in such wise as to justify the custom of administering It even to infants.[1] Others, again, because of their profound reverence for the Holy Eucharist, demanded the highest moral perfection of those

[1] This custom survived until the sixteenth century. Concerning it, the Roman Catechism has this to say: "Docendum est eos excipi, qui nondum rationis usum propter aetatis imbecillitatem habent. Hi enim neque Sacram Eucharistiam a profano et communi pane sciunt discernere, neque ad eam accipiendam pietatem animi et religionem offerre possunt."

—In the Eastern schismatic Church, this custom prevails even to the present day.

—Migne: Patrologiae Cursus Completus.

—Bartmann, Bernhard: Op. cit.

who would receive it.[1] And the result of this rigorism was, that the faithful were dissuaded from communicating; at first receiving only once a week, and later abstaining during a considerable part of the year. In the subsequent period, these two conflicting schools of theological thought led many to discontinue the cult of the Eucharist as it was originally practiced, and brought upon the Church all kinds of moral evils. Meanwhile, owing to the spread of rationalism, some Christians were no longer able to display that constancy, before the pagan inquisitors, which had been the glory of their ancestors. All too many wavered in their loyalty to the Faith, and stooped to save their lives by offering sacrifice to the idols, by burning incense before them, or at least, by entering their names in the roster of heathen devotees—and thus lost for themselves the crown of martyrdom.

[1] Matt.: VIII, 8: ". . . Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof. . . ."

# (B) THE PERIOD FROM THE EDICT OF MILAN TO THE COUNCIL OF TRENT.

## CHAPTER VI.

### RELIGIOUS QUIETISM.

The old classic narrative of the wooden horse of Troy might aptly serve to illustrate the manner in which grave abuses crept into the Church, once the promulgation of the imperial edict of Milan in the year 313 A.D. had brought to an end three centuries of bloody persecution. The friendly attitude now taken toward the Church by the imperial government unhappily resulted in the appearance among the ranks of the catechumens of large numbers of persons to whom Christian ideals were totally foreign, and who presented themselves only in order to gain for themselves the favor of the autocrat, by receiving the Sacrament of Baptism. This unfortunate numerical increase brought about quite a radical change in the mentality of the Church's membership; for from that time on a great part of the population was satisfied with receiving Bap-

tism and thus achieving formal union in Faith with the emperor, and concerned itself but little with the worship of the Holy Eucharist and with the virtues proceeding from it. Some African bishops attempted to persuade and even subtly to compel Constantine the Great, though he was but a catechumen, to take into his own hands the supreme ecclesiastical power and to accept and adjudicate their seditious appeal from the decrees of Pope Melchiades (✠314) and of Pope Sylvester (✠335), touching on the African schism. While it is true that Constantine refused to be a party to this base intrigue, his successors were not so scrupulous.

The succeeding emperors not only usurped authority in matters pertaining to ecclesiastical administration, but they also claimed the right to interfere in the formulation of decrees which bore directly on the Faith. Thus there evolved a new Christian psychology. The place of the Blessed Eucharist, as the pivot of Christian life and as the source of peace of conscience through union with Christ, was now taken by the Sacrament of Baptism, which was sought by many for the poor satisfaction obtainable through it alone, of union in Faith with the autocrat. Evangelical love of fellow man and solicitude for his tem-

poral and spiritual welfare, now yielded to quietism [1] and to a most un-Christlike intolerance, which found expression mainly in the tendency to spread the Gospel with the aid of imperial decrees or of the sword.

The second "gift of the Danai," brought along by the new undesirable element in the Church's membership—was a corruption of morals which was especially pronounced among the aristocracy. As a consequence of the corruption of the imperial court, the liturgical privileges and honors which were accorded especially by the Oriental Rite [2] to the autocrat, to his cabinet and to his army, in return for friendliness shown the Church, could not always give rise to public edification. Furthermore, tolerance of sin was expected of the rulers of the Church, and pastors who censured the guilty were oftentimes punished severely.

Moreover, conditions of life had undergone a

[1] Hergenroether Card. Joseph: Handbuch der Allgemeinen Kirchengeschichte.

[2] Publicly repeated prayers offered for the emperor and his court and army during the Mass and other services, especially in the Oriental Rites.

—Among other abuses—the "privileged" lay persons were admitted into the Sanctuary during the services and both the sacred paten and the star of Bethlehem (Greek Rite), were proffered to them by the priest to be kissed;—this is done in the old world even at present, especially in the separated churches.

vast change. Zealous worshippers of the Holy Eucharist were no longer, as heretofore, exposed to persecution for the Faith; and there thus disappeared an important psychological incentive to the sustaining of the old Eucharistic practice. This was another sort of deadly quietism which rapidly spread over vast numbers of the descendants of the martyrs.

Finally the incursions of barbarians into the territory of the Roman Empire and the migration of the nations both contributed toward the neglect of the Eucharistic Cult.[1] By burning churches and by killing or capturing the clergy, the migrating hordes made daily Holy Communion a physical impossibility.

In vain did the foremost prelates and Doctors of both Greek and Latin sections of the Church, strive to remedy the growing spirit of unconcern toward the Blessed Sacrament. Saints Ambrose, Augustine, Basil the Great, Cyprian, Jerome and John Chrysostom endeavored with all the logic and eloquence at their command to revive the earlier devotion; but despite their exertions, indifference spread more and more. The Eastern Church made concessions to the weakening spirit by gradually limiting its demands. Saint

[1] Hergenroether: Op. cit.

Basil, for instance, though thoroughly convinced of the desirability of communicating daily, thought it prudent to urge that Holy Communion be received at least once a week; and Saint John Chrysostom, who theoretically held the same opinion as Saint Basil, insisted that at least the ancient custom of receiving daily during Lent be preserved.

Still, the Church did not at once lose all the virtues which she had formerly derived from the cult of the Holy Eucharist, for we see that in the fourth century there flourished those renowned Fathers and Doctors of both the Greek and Latin rites, who, though powerless to overcome the growing neglect of frequent Holy Communion, were not remiss in themselves seeking this source of all grace. The Fathers and Doctors, fortified by the Bread of Angels, gained a great and salutary influence over the minds of all, however indifferent, who bore the Christian name; and under their leadership the Church developed theological studies, waged a violent campaign against heresies and vigorously defended and vindicated the divinely constituted authority of the Sovereign Pontiff and of the Bishops in communion with him, including, of course, the Patriarch of Constantinople, against

the insolent machinations of the imperial court.[1] Above all, in making provision for the destitute, the Church took care to utilize the feelings of love of fellow man, which had been fostered in the preceding period of ardent devotion, and thus accomplished the foundation of magnificent charitable institutions, which could not be viewed without envy by the enemies of religion.

For a long time indeed, that is until the eleventh century, the earlier devotion of the Greek nation to the Most Blessed Eucharist was rewarded by the steadfastness with which this people persevered in the Faith; for, notwithstanding their innate genius for metaphysical speculation and notwithstanding, too, the encouragement and support afforded heresiarchs by the government and occasionally by the monks—the Greek people failed permanently to adopt a single heresy. On the contrary, all these heresies, although originating among the Greeks, spread in the course of years among the nations converted at the time when the Eucharistic cult commenced to decline at the ancient centers of Christianity. Yet five centuries later, when the reception of the Blessed Eucharist was regarded with scandalous indifference by the

[1] For instance, in the matter of the Monophysites and Iconoclasts.

great prelates of the Oriental Church,[1] the same Greek people, with surprisingly slight opposition, permitted themselves to be led into schism by their Patriarch and civil government.

[1] The newly-converted Bulgarians asked Patriarch Photius for permission to receive daily Holy Communion during the Lenten season. They were refused; but petitioned Pope Nicholas I, who gladly granted their request.—(Respons. ad Bulgaros, 863).

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE POST-EFFECTS OF THE "DISCIPLINA ARCANI."

Lest we judge the Greeks too harshly, we should remember that in the East there existed special conditions, which naturally resulted in a falling away from the earlier usage of frequent Holy Communion. We have in mind especially the compulsory secrecy technically known as the "Disciplina Arcani," which was originally devised to protect the Divine Mysteries from pagan curiosity, but which was retained in the Oriental Church much longer than was necessary. Introduced even to the Canon of the Mass, the "Disciplina Arcani" operated to withhold from non-Catholics all knowlege whatever of the Blessed Sacrament. Even today in the prayer immediately preceding the reception of Holy Communion, according to the Greek Rite, the faithful promise Our Lord not to divulge the secret of the Eucharist; and this promise is exacted of them in all strictness.[1]

[1] ". . . because I shall not reveal the secret to Thine enemies, nor shall I kiss Thee like Judas. . . ."—Today, this anachronism is understood figuratively as meaning that the faithful, receiving Christ's Body and Blood—shall not betray Him to sin and the devil, i.e., will not prefer these to Our Lord.

Small wonder then, that, beginning with the ninth century, one can find only little mention in the Greek theological works of the Blessed Sacrament. So true is this, that the sermons and religious tracts written by the Greek clerics of the ninth century contained few distinctive features of Catholicism; and might quite as well have been composed by the Protestants of our own day. It stands to reason that while this compulsory secrecy was highly injurious to the Greeks themselves, who after all, could not entirely rid themselves of their ancient tradition—it must have affected even more injuriously the surrounding nations, whom they baptized and instructed in the tenets of Christianity. Deprived of the right teaching on the subject of the Eucharist, even the best of the Greeks and of the converted barbarians kept themselves distant from Christian life in the fullest meaning of the phrase. Neither unity of Faith nor the spread of the Gospel gave them concern; nor did many of them appreciate the necessity of active love of fellow man as a criterion of inner godliness; while the innate aspiration of the soul toward God they tried to satisfy with an abstract asceticism.[1]

[1] Makary, Metropolitan of Moscow: Istoria Russkoy Cerkvi. —Hergenroether: Op. cit.

A study of the history of the Graeco-Ruthenian[1] Church supports our assertion that there exists a necessary relation between the cult of the Holy Eucharist and the true Christian life. The foundations of Ruthenian Catholicism were laid through the efforts of missionaries of both rites, about two centuries prior to the conversion of King Saint Vladímir the Great and all his subjects in the year 988. The evangelization of the Ukrainians was therefore begun in the third quarter of the eighth century, at a time when the worship of the Blessed Sacrament throughout the Universal Church was lamentably neglected, and when there were no preachers likely to set before their converts the high standards of former days. Our assumption is confirmed by the fact that in the fourteen theological tomes, which have come down to us from the Ruthenian theologians of the tenth and elev-

[1] Ruthenian and Ukrainian are synonymous. The students of both secular and the ecclesiastical history will remember that any reference therein made to the word "Russian" in reality means Ruthenian or Ukrainian. It was only in the XVII. century that Peter the Great, Czar of Moscovy, appropriated this appellation to himself and his Moscovite people. "Russian" or "Rossian" was the Greek, and "Ruthenian" was the Latin synonym for "Ukrainian."—The Ukrainians are the largest national body, not only among the Slavs but in the world, of the Eastern, basically Greek Rite, in communion with the Holy Apostolic See of Rome. Their variation of the original Byzantine liturgical usage is now known as the Ruthenian or Ukrainian Rite.

enth centuries,[1] there is not a single mention of the Holy Eucharist.

We need not wonder then that when temptation came in the form of the outbreak against the Pope on the part of the Emperor Michael Cerularius in 1054, the Ruthenian Church could not effectively resist the disruptive influence of the Greeks; so that finally, after protracted wavering for about a hundred years, but without the slightest provocation that might be urged to extenuate its guilt—it fell likewise into schism.

However, after the Oecumenical Council of Trent the Catholic Church arose with renewed strength, and having regained to the unity of her fold the Ukrainian people (1595), she spread among them the cult of the Holy Eucharist in accordance with the ancient ideal. Through this proper worship of the Blessed Sacrament the soul of the Ukrainian people was so regenerated that, when there arose another great temptation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, during the horrible persecution of the Ruthenian Catholics by the Russian Empire, abetted by its schismatical hierarchy—the Ukrainians man-

[1] Wozniak, Michael: The History of Ukrainian Literature. —Hergenroether: Op. cit.

ifested such marvellous steadfastness in the Faith and such unshakable loyalty to the Roman Union, that not only the clergy and the monks and nuns but even entire communities suffered confiscation of property, imprisonment, exile and even death for their loyalty to the throne of St. Peter. Our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, of illustrious memory, is the author of the following richly merited encomium: "We derive strength and joy from the admirable and truly heroic spectacle of strong and constant spirit offered to the Most High God, to angels, and to men, by the Ruthenians of the Diocese of Kholm, who chose to suffer any evil, and to endanger and lose even life itself rather than to renounce the ancestral faith." [1]

[1] The Encyclical of Pope Pius IX of May 13, 1874: "Omnem solicitudinem" (Acta Apost. Sedis): "Sed . . . nos reficit et recreat praeclarissimum ac plane heroicum fortis ac constantis animi spectaculum superrime Deo, angelis et hominibus oblatum a Chelmensis Dioceseos Ruthenis, qui . . . mala quaeque perpeti atque ipsam vitam in extremum discrimen maluerunt adduci, quam avitae fidei jacturum facere."

—Pelesz Julian, Bp.: Geschichte der Union der ruthenischen Kirche mit Rom.

—Harasiewicz Michael: Annales Ecclesiae Ruthenae.

—Hergenroether: Op. cit.

—Pitynek: Op. cit.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE STATUS OF THE EUCHARISTIC DEVOTION IN THE WEST.

The history of the Latin or Western Church affords us a better opportunity of studying in detail the status of the Eucharistic cult by centuries, though generally speaking, the same evolution is met with in the West as in the East. In view of the widespread neglect of frequent Holy Communion the Synod of Agde in 506 A.D., enacted that the faithful must communicate at least thrice in a year. Other Councils, for example that of Aquisgran in 836 A.D. and that of Tours in 850 A.D., condemned indifference toward Holy Communion as the sole cause of the moral depravity of the time, and tried, in so far as it was possible, to encourage the faithful to communicate at least several times a year.

But these efforts were futile. To make matters still worse, during the ninth century there began in the West a discussion involving the question of Christ's real presence in the Eucha-

rist.[1] This discussion, at first purely academic, led eventually to an open break. Those opposing the real presence showed themselves to be clearly heretics; while the great majority persevered in the traditional doctrine of the Church, which strove to protect the faithful against heretical influence by the establishment of special monastic orders [2] and by the proclamation of a holy day, the Feast of Corpus Christi, in honor of the Blessed Sacrament.

In accordance with the spirit of the times, both sides took two arms, and for two centuries blood was shed in defence of the assailed dogma. Naturally, the status of the cult could not be greatly elevated by the sword; nevertheless it must be admitted that this forcible propaganda eventually saved the orthodox believers from forgetting entirely the worth of the August Sacrament for which they were contending. A more decisive factor, however, in preserving the cult was the Holy Roman See, which met in so satisfactory a manner the petition of the newly-converted Bulgarians relative to daily Holy

[1] Hergenroether: Op. cit.—Bartmann: Op. cit.
—Naegle, A.: Die Eucharistielehre des hl. Chrysostomus des Doctor Eucharistiae.
[2] The Dominican Order.

Communion during Lent that had been rejected by the Patriarch Photius and his monks.

At all events, mere theoretical adherence to a lofty principle on the part of its protagonists could not save daily Holy Communion even in the West. In the eighth century it became necessary to pass legislation requiring at least Paschal Communion as a test of allegiance to the Church;[1] but we read that in the fourteenth century even this decree of the Fourth Council of the Lateran was obeyed by few. Preachers who, like the eloquent Jesuit, Blessed Peter Faber, dared to advocate daily Holy Communion, were publicly insulted upon the streets.

Amid the general decline of the cult there waxed to gigantic proportions throughout the whole Church the two already mentioned unhealthy tendencies that at first appeared during the earliest period of apologetic inquiry. Complete neglect of daily Holy Communion followed from the arguments of strict rigorism; while laxity, hardly noticeable during the days of the catacombs, and evidenced in those days only in the Communion of infants—eventually led in later times to the frightful desecration

[1] Denzinger: Enchiridion Symbolorum et Definitionum.

known as the Communion of the dead,[1] and to the abuse of the Sacred Species for various superstitious purposes. Only when the pristine custom of frequent reception was preserved for some time at least, were the spiritual gains on a par with those of the catacombic era. By way of example, we would cite the entire Irish nation and the reformed monastic orders. Both among the Irish and among the reformed monks the early usage continued to obtain, and to the Irish we are indebted for perhaps the greatest exemplification of missionary zeal, while to the reformed orders we owe the preservation of Christian life in western Europe, together with an invaluable object lesson in the care of the poor that might well be taken to heart by modern sociologists!

The general decline of Eucharistic devotion adversely affected all outward expressions of Christian life. Instead of the earlier union in Faith, there appeared temporary schisms in the West and the Great Schism of Constantinople in the East; instead of holiness, immorality;[2] instead of evangelization on the basis of charity toward fellowman, religious wars or compul-

[1] Synods: Hippo (393); Auxerre (585).
[2] Pitynek: Op. cit.

sory christening; instead of solicitude for the poor, spoliation of the institutes designed for their aid, and intolerable haughtiness on the part of the wealthy; instead of social evolution, a new slavery in the form of serfdom; instead of constancy in Faith, timidity and vacillation; instead of reverence for the Supreme Pontiff, insults publicly offered him; instead of universal harmony under the Vicar of Christ, a spirit of aggression and the growth of state absolutism.[1]

Still, in the West, as one may conclude from the sporadic manifestations of it, religious life had not died out completely. A variety of monastic orders and of other ecclesiastical institutions brought the masses of the people to the realization of the urgent need for genuine reformation. Thus God's Providence, opposing evil with good, prepared the great work of the Council of Trent.

[1] Ratzinger: Op. cit. "Es waren alle Bande der Ordnung und gutten Sitten auch in den katholischen Gebieten zerriessen; die Katholiken furchtsam und ohne Selbsttrauen; man war versucht an dem Fort bestande des Katholizismus zu verzweifeln"—("Even in Catholic districts all order and every moral bond were destroyed; the Catholics were terrified and without self-confidence. One might well doubt whether Catholicism would continue to exist").

# (C) THE PERIOD FROM THE COUNCIL OF TRENT TO THE PRESENT DAY.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE RETURN TO THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST.

The entire interval in ecclesiastical history between the Council of Trent and the present day is characterized by one outstanding feature, namely, the return to the Holy Eucharist. Theoretically the Church had never wavered in her conviction of the high laudability of daily reception; but to effect a return to this apostolic practice was a task fraught with many difficulties. Just as St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom, taking into account the sentiment and attitude of the masses, did not push forward their own convictions but were satisfied to demand at least a partial preservation of the ancient usage—so also beginning with the Council of Trent, the Church developed her sacramental programme, not at once, but gradually, and in a manner least apt to arouse destructive opposition.

For this reason the period following the Council of Trent should be divided into two parts. First, the period of preparation which lasted until the reign of the saintly Pope Pius X, or, more exactly until the promulgation of his decree of the twentieth of December, 1905, relative to daily Holy Communion; second, the period of restoration, from 1905 on.

The Council of Trent increased the rigour of the ruling of the Fourth Lateran Council regarding the annual Paschal Communion,[1] and expressed its eager solicitude: "That those present at the Holy Sacrifice always partake of Holy Communion not only spiritually but also actually by receiving the Blessed Sacrament." As to the frequency of this presence at Mass, the Oecumenical Council deemed it prudent to be silent.[2] However, the Roman Cathechism, published in 1566, goes one step further, exhorting pastors diligently to urge the faithful: "that as they daily supply their bodies with necessary food, they ought not to neglect to feed and

[1] Denzinger, Enchiridion: "Si quis negaverit omnes et singulos fideles utriusque sexus cum ad annos discretionis pervenerint, teneri singulis annis saltem in Paschate ad communicandum iuxta praeceptum sanctae matris Ecclesiae, A. S." (Sess. 13, De Euchar. c. 9).

[2] Decretum S. Congr. Card. Conc. Triden. Interpretum: "dies . . . non praescripsit, sed quasi humanam infirmitatem secum reputasset . . . quid cuperet tantum indicavit."—Denzinger.

strengthen the souls through Holy Communion."

The progressive improvement could not be impeded by Baius (1569), who revived the former rigourism and gained a certain limited following among the Catholic clergy. On the contrary, the Church utilized this occasion for emphasizing still further her position in the matter. The second Synod of Milan, convoked under the presidency of the Archbishop of that city, Cardinal St. Charles Borromeo (✠1584), threatened to deprive such pastors as might thereafter presume to oppose daily Holy Communion of the right of preaching from the pulpit. From this incident one may see how wisely the Fathers of the Council of Trent had acted in determining upon a course of gradual evolution. Still, a decree of a particular Synod could not rectify an evil spread so widely over the whole Church. Furthermore, in the seventeenth century there broke out Jansenism, a movement favored even by some Bishops, whose misdirected influence tended to dampen the newly awakened zeal for the Blessed Sacrament.

While combating these errors,[1] the Church

[1] Decree of Pope Innocent XI of 1679: "Cum ad aures," and that of Pope Alexander VIII of December 7, 1690: "Sanctissimus Dominus noster."

did not neglect to occupy herself with the working out of a positive programme for the regeneration of Christian life. Sermons, theological literature, spiritual exercises and newly founded religious associations were gradually changing the psychology of the faithful. The restoring of the practice of frequent Holy Communion was much facilitated by the inauguration of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which Divine Providence had called into being as if to counterbalance the havoc wrought by Jansenistic rigourism. From the moment of its inception to the present day, the devotion to the Sacred Heart has shown a parallel development to that of the Eucharistic cult, those especially devoted to the Sacred Heart progressing gradually from monthly to weekly and finally to daily Holy Communion. At the end of the nineteenth century the cult of the Sacred Heart had reached its peak, and at the same time had brought to a fruitful close the period of preparation for the new growth of the cult of the Eucharist.

That the Holy Apostolic See was extremely cautious in making the transition from frequent, that is, weekly, to daily reception—is shown by the acts of the two immediate predecessors of

the "Eucharistic Pope," Pius X. Pope Pius IX did not venture beyond a semi-official propaganda, counseling daily reception.[1] Neither did Pope Leo XIII risk the issuance of an edict introducing the usage of daily reception, although in his heart he could not but desire it.[2] It remained for Pope Pius X courageously to raise the sacramental discipline to that high level on which it had stood during the days of the catacombs. Condemning all sorts of pietistic scruples and forbidding all further discussion on the subject of the spiritual preparation to be required of those who would communicate frequently—he removed the obstacles to the renewal of Christian life in its fulness, and by his appeal to the children, dated March 25, 1910, he established for his programme a sound psychological basis.

[1] In 1861, Pope Pius IX personally distributed the pamphlet of Monsignor Segur to the pastors of Rome and recommended its circulation among the children on the occasion of the first Holy Communion.—Zukowski: Komunia Swieta, Czesta i Codzienna.

[2] Compare the Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII: "Mirae caritatis."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE EFFORTS FOR A RENEWAL OF CHRISTIAN LIFE THROUGH THE EUCHARISTIC LORD.

Let us review the practical results which have accrued to the Church from the almost four centuries of conscious effort at reform, through which she passed since the Council of Trent. Roughly we may estimate that one half of the distance toward the final goal has already been traversed. Whole peoples have already come to realize the importance of daily Holy Communion, and are now commencing to work assiduously for the revival of this primitive Christian devotion. Italy, France, Holland, England and America are in the lead, the numbers of those who daily approach the Holy Table in these countries being already quite large and constantly growing.

Germany is just now seeing the close of a discussion, started by those who were at first undecided in their attitude toward the movement; and the time is not far distant when she will

witness a transition from the sporadic practice of daily Holy Communion, depending upon the opinions of individual pastors, to a general cult of the Eucharist in its original meaning. So far, the Slavic countries and the missionary territories have lagged behind in the movement; but even in those lands, wherever pastors evince zeal —the idea of Pope Pius X is bearing fruit.

Pious ingenuity is from month to month devising new means for increasing the numbers of frequent communicants. Eucharistic Congresses, associations and an extensive literature, consisting of books, periodicals and tracts, not exclusively academic but popular as well—are aiding in the work of restoring all things in Christ. It affords us pleasure to remark that many reputable authorities on the science of pedagogy are no longer insensible to the far-reaching influence that daily Holy Communion of children and of youth generally may exert upon their education and upon future generations.

Very consoling it is to note that certain recent pedagogical textbooks introduce the subject of the Eucharist into the systems of education which they sponsor;[1] quite unlike similar text-

[1] Engert: Psychologie und Paedagogie der Erstbeichte und Erstkommunion.

books of earlier publication, which, notwithstanding the fact that some of them were written by priests and bishops, almost unanimously disregarded this most efficacious means for the moulding of strong characters. In a word, we are progressing at a pace which gives us every reason to hope that the cult of the Holy Eucharist, which prevailed throughout the ancient Diaspora, will be restored in its entirety.

We are not as yet sufficiently removed from these historical facts, to be able to view in true perspective the influence of the Eucharistic cult in the foregoing two phases of the last period. For the time being, we can form reliable conclusions only concerning the results of the preparatory work dating from the Council of Trent—which work paved the way for the decisive action of Pope Pius X.

During the last four hundred years thousands of missionaries, animated by thoroughly disinterested love of God and of fellow man and characterized by steadfastness in Faith even unto martyrdom,[1] have resolutely forsaken home and fatherland; and thanks to their almost incredible self-sacrifice, the accession of millions of

[1] In Africa, China, Japan, etc.

neophytes has already generously compensated Holy Mother Church for the losses sustained through the so-called Reformation.[1] The Holy Apostolic See is once again in the ascendancy; she is fast regaining her former weight in the councils of nations, and is resuming her impaired function of shaping their destinies in conformity with the will of God.[2]

That the post-Tridentine era has been prolific in examples of heroic sanctity is evidenced by the imposing roster of its Saints who have merited the honors of formal canonization. Furthermore, charity toward the poor and the afflicted—that glowing virtue which with St. John the Evangelist we have rightly called one of the peculiar works of Christ's followers—has already manifested itself in the founding of a large number of monastic orders, both of men and of women, which, combining the active with the contemplative life, are unsparingly devoting their energies to the alleviation of human miseries.

All these glorious manifestations of the renewal of Christian life inaugurated by the Oecumenical Council of Trent, provide an in-

[1] South America and Eastern Asia.
[2] Marx, J.: Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte.

controvertible proof of the divinity of the Catholic Church. Indeed, even the early beginnings of them in great measure redeem the fateful age of Luther before the bar of ecclesiastical history.

The sad experience of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries will ever serve as an object lesson to those theologians and pastors of souls who, through an unwarranted rigourism, would withhold the faithful from communicating frequently. Toward the close of the eighteenth century, as a consequence of the long continued neglect of Holy Communion, the intelligentsia grew apathetic regarding religion. Agnosticism and downright atheism became first tolerable, then fashionable, and naturally enough Catholics were plunged into the same despair as at the time of Luther's rebellion.

However, in the course of the nineteenth century, when the sacramental discipline of Trent was coming to be enforced, there took place a most edifying growth of all Catholic activities; and the same epoch was marked by a splendid increase in devotional fervour, which latter was due immediately to the zeal of the Apostleship of Prayer.

Encouraging as is the foregoing résumé, we

must not flatter ourselves that all is now happily accomplished and that the long desired millennium is already upon us. On the contrary, we must face the realization that there still remain some extremely vexatious problems which urgently require solution, as for example, the completion of social evolution according to evangelical principles, and the establishment of harmonious relations among the various races of mankind.

Nevertheless, the foregoing study of the absolute necessity of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist for the sustentation of Christian life, not alone in the individual, but in society as well—justifies our earnest hope that future generations will not be remiss in carrying to completion a work so auspiciously begun.

Let us pray that if not we ourselves, at least those who are to come after us—will magnificently succeed in the task of introducing upon the earth, in all its entirety, the reign of Christ the King! Moreover, let us firmly resolve to do all in our power to further the inspired plan of Our Holy Father among the Saints, Pope Pius X, to the end that the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, being better known

and loved, and being more frequently and more fervently received—may, according to the high design of Our Lord and God Jesus Christ, be unto us the fulfillment of every need.

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